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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by junior or senior high school English teachers, the articles and features in this theme issue focus on romantic fiction and poetry for young adults. The articles and their authors are as follows (1) "The Gift of Poetry" (L. B. Hopkins); (2) "Maybe the Gallows, But Not a Tin Ear" (A. K. Helbig); (3) "A Report from the 1986 ALAN Workshop: Celebrating Young Adult Literature;" (4) "Politics, Poetry and Teaching: A Personal Journey" (A. Adoff); (5) "Seven Myths about Teaching Poetry, or, How I Stopped Chasing Foul Balls" (P. B. Janeczko); (6) "Experiencing Poetry: An Expanded View" (H. Agee); (7) "Writing from Local History: Try Historical Poetry" (M. Angelotti); (8) "From Print to Person, or How to Get an Author for Your School" (M. Wagner); (9) "Love and Lust in the Secondary Schools: Do Formula Romances Have a Place in the Schools?" (S. G. Bennett and A. Kuhn); (10) "Double Date to Double Love: Female Sex Roles in Teen Romances" (J. Litton); (11) "Why I Write...Why I Write What I Write" (N. F. Mazer); (12) "Writing as a Young Adult" (T. Larimer); (13) "Disenchantment Overdose--A New Threat to Youth?" (P. A. Wood); (14) "An Excerpt from 'Buck': Tamela Larimer's Avon Flare Award Winning Novel"; (15) "Now That You Asked" (R. Cline and E. Poe); and (16) "Bifocal Eyes: The Middle-Aged Parent Looks at Adolescent Literature through New Lenses" (S. S. Geary). (NKA)

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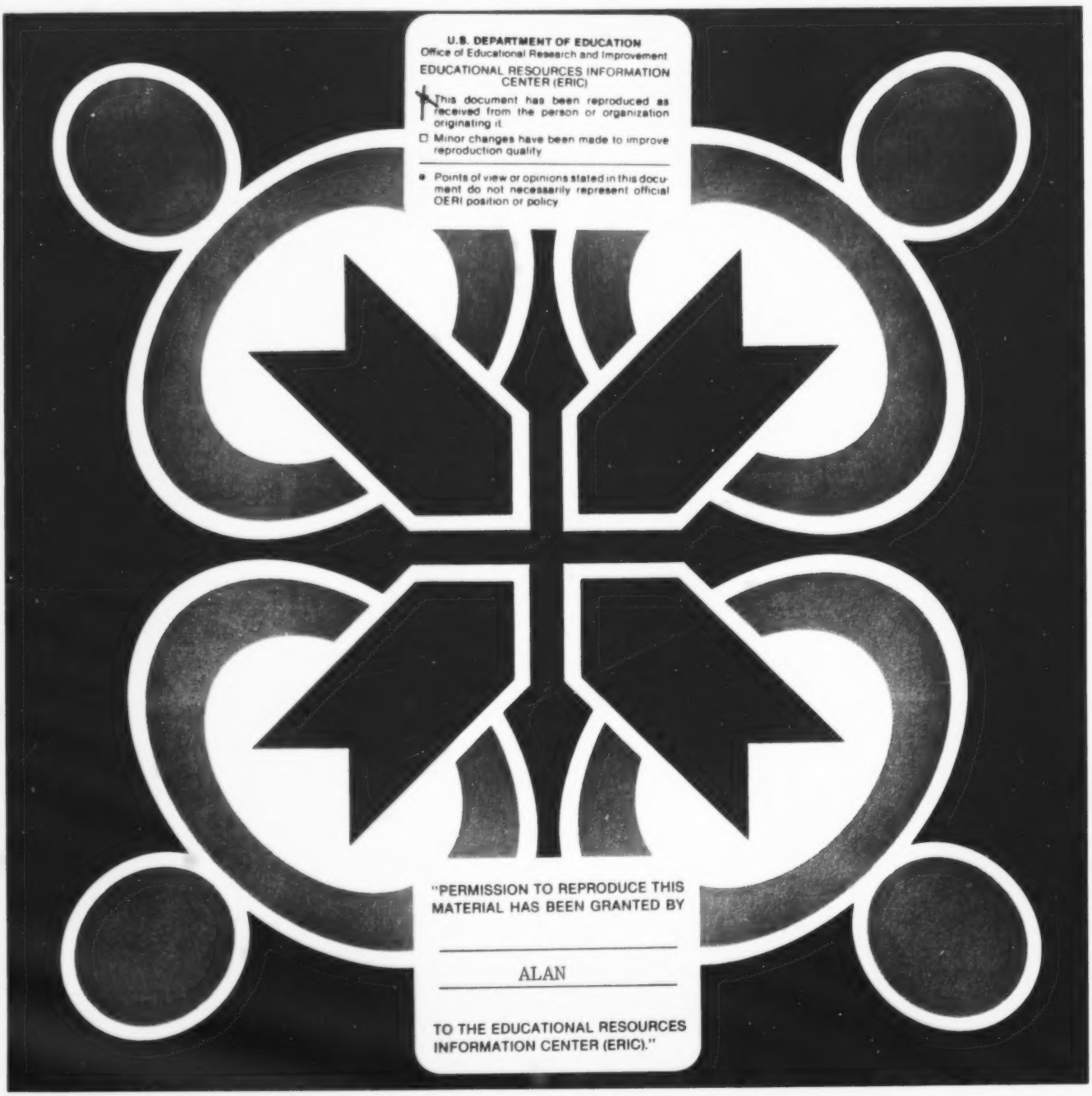
In Spring Hearts Turn to Poetry and Love



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THE GIFT OF POETRY

Lee Bennett Hopkins
Scarborough, New York

Life would seem pat without the vision of poets and their words. The poet perceives and preserves life, capturing the essence as well as the delicate nuances of everyday objects, thoughts and feelings through the language of their experience. The poet takes the ordinary and makes it extraordinary, revealing life to each and every individual. The poet causes us to think, wonder and feel more and more intensely until we begin to see life in new and wondrous ways.

Like life itself the ever-growing world of poetry continues to change. Contemporary poetry collections for young adult readers reflect the various moods of life around and about us today.

My work in introducing poetry to teenagers has brought me to major cities, suburban towns and the most rural of areas. No matter what the socioeconomic level of students I meet, poetry is a common denominator -- good poetry works. I have personally witnessed the universality that only verse can bring.

During the recent decades several outstanding collections of poetry have appeared, culling together the physical, intellectual, emotional and social mores of our diverse culture.

Poetry by contempary poets, as well as old masters, must continue to be a part of youth. I have said it before, I shall say it many times: Poetry must flow freely in one's life; it should come as naturally as breathing, for nothing -- *no thing* -- can ring and rage through hearts and minds as does this genre of literature.

Poetry can open up worlds to readers which they have never thought possible. But most important, it can be a source of love and hope that students can carry with them the rest of their lives.

BRING ON THE BOOKS

Below is a discussion of outstanding collections which no young adult reader should miss. Look in your library for these titles so they can be made available to adolescent readers.

After introducing several of these volumes, engage students to seek other titles to share with one another. Poetry is meant to be read aloud -- said, heard, shouted, sung. Make poetry a part of every day and give young adult readers a gift that will last a lifetime -- the gift of knowing, appreciating and loving poetry.

INDIVIDUAL WORKS

Myra Cohn Livingston, winner of the 1980 National Council of Teachers of English Excellence in Poetry Award for Children, pays homage to trees in *Monkey Puzzle and Other Poems*. Each of these original verses is about trees found in various parts of the United States, such as the Jacaranda, Douglas Fir, Wych Elm and Weeping Mulberry. Black-and-white woodcuts by Antonio Frasconi illustrate the volume.

The world of sports is viewed from the clever pen of Lillian Morrison in several original volumes of verse. *The Sidewalk Racer and other Poems of Sports and Motion*, contains 38 works dealing with baseball, football, track, tennis, skateboarding and more. *The Break Dance Kids: Poems of Sports, Motion and Locomotion*, brings 35 more observations about sports and other physical activities such as "The Slalom Skier," "The 100 Meters" and "The Finish Line." Both volumes are illustrated with black-and-white photographs.

Science is the poet's focus in *Overheard in a Bubble Chamber and Other Science Poems*. Inspired by developments in physics, mathematics, biology and astronomy, Morrison's works are wordplays at their best. Consider "The Invasion of the Star Streaks: Falling stars shoot quanta into the dark belly of the universe/ where moon ova wait to bring forth mountains,/monkeys, goddesses." The volume is illustrated with dramatic black-and-white paintings by Eyre de Lanux. A Glossary of terms is appended. Perfect for science sharing or science fairing.

Carl Sandburg was one of America's greatest writers; his poetry is a celebration of the American scene. In *Rainbows Are Made: Poems by Carl Sandburg*, I selected 70 verses from the more than 800 poems he wrote during his lifetime. Grouped into six sections, each is headed by one of Mr. Sandburg's own definitions of poetry which appear in *Good Morning, America*; for example: "Poetry is a shuffling of boxes of illusions buckled with a strap of facts." The sections deal with people and their emotions, word play, everyday things, the seasons, the sea and nighttime. Illustrations are by Fritz Eichenberg.

COLLECTIONS

Paul Janeczko has become one of the foremost anthologists for young adult readers. As a high school teacher he truly taps into the world of adolescent experiences. Many of his collections have received numerous awards. *Don't Forget to Fly: A Cycle of Modern Poems*, represents the works of seventy modern poets brought together as a journey through a range of human emotions, including poems about parents, love, suicide, marriage, visiting the dentist and the love of cats, written by such talents as May Swenson, Ogden Nash, Randall Jarrell and Walt Whitman. *Pocket Poems: Selected for a Journey* features 104 poems divided into three sections. Each verse is noted for its brevity. Some of the selections are a mere two lines, packing in a variety of emotions. One such delight is "Song Against Broccoli" by Roy Blount, Jr.: "The local groceries are all out of broccoli,/Loccoli."

Janeczko takes a completely different approach to his volume, *Poetspeak: In Their Works, About Their Work*. Sixty-two modern poets in this collection of 148 poems, provide commentary on their individual works, telling us about the how and why of their craft. Such poets as Nikki Giovanni, Gregory Corso, William Dickey and Maxine Kumin are featured. Front endpapers contain black-and-white snapshots of the poets. This volume gives us a fascinating glimpse into the minds and hearts of the poets who speak directly to us. Other titles by the compiler include *Postcard Poems: A Collection of Poetry for Sharing, Strings: A Gathering of Family Poems* and the recently published *Going Over to Your Place: Poems for Each Other*.

Myra Cohn Livingston has also compiled several collections for young adult readers. *Why Am I Grown So Cold? Poems of the Unknowable* contains some 150 poems giving a wide array of verse dealing with the supernatural. Titles of the 12 sections are intriguing unto themselves: for example, "Enchantment, Witchery, Sorcery, Allurement and Necromancy" and "White Wands, a Haunted Oven, The Mewlips and Other Strange Matters." The book's title stems from "The Warning" by Adelaide Crapsey, a cinquain written in the early 1900s: "Just now,/Out of the strange Still dusk. . .as strange, as still. . . /A white moth flew: why am I grown so cold?" The wide range of authors include: Edna St. Vincent Millay, Shel Silverstein and Rabindranath Tagore. A second anthology by Livingston is *O Frabjous Day: Poetry for Holidays and Celebrations*, containing over 100 poems.

Love is Like the Lion's Tooth: An Anthology of Love Poems, compiled by Frances McCullough, is a collection of over 75 selections dealing with the various effects and stages of love. Poets include Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Bishop and Yevgency Yevtushenko.

Anthologies by Helen Plotz are exciting, well-planned and diverse. *Saturday's Children: Poems of Work* presents the poet's preoccupation with the joys and sorrows of the complex subject of working. Over one hundred poems from the world over are divided into four sections. Plotz has done many other volumes focusing in on a particular theme including *Eye's Delight: Poems of Art and Architecture* and *Gladly Learn and Gladly Teach: Poems of the School Experience*.

Further information about poetry and the young adult reader can be found in two professional books: *Reaching Adolescents: The Young Adult Book and the School* by Arthea J. S. Reed and *Literature for Today's Young Adults* by Alleen Pace Nilsen and Kenneth L. Donelson.

The poet Yuan Mei has written: "Only be willing to search for poetry, and there will be poetry."

Set students on *the* search. Pass the poetry -- *please*!

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MAYBE THE GALLOWS, BUT NOT A TIN EAR

Alethea K. Helbig
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Someone, perhaps it was Auden, said that reading and hearing good poetry may not save young people from ending their lives on the gallows, but it will keep them from growing up with tin ears. While I suspect that many adults who work with young people secretly hope that exposure to good literature will sharpen the moral perceptions of their students, Auden was probably right. That really is too much to expect of a story, a novel, a poem or even a series of poems. Perhaps the most any good literature, and poetry in particular, can be expected to do is to give its readers pleasure through reading and hearing it and to make them more sensitive to the world around them. The most any good literature, especially poetry, can do for young people is to help them toward richer, fuller lives.

Good poems can take familiar, everyday objects and mundane matters, things one seldom thinks much about, like bedposts, scarecrows and washing hung out to dry, and invest them with new meaning through skillful use of rich, connotative language. As Robert Graves's sleepy Betsy lies awake in bed one night, her imagination takes over, and she watches her sister's bedpost become a "grave young warrior" who "tells her stories of old battle/ As she lies in bed." Betsy learns the warrior has been placed under a spell and must stay a bedpost, "Until a maiden shall release him/ With unpitying tears" ("The Bedpost"). James Kirkup also makes effective use of personification and allusion as he reports the poignant cry of a weatherworn scarecrow despised in his old age even by the wild birds:

> *I wear the labourer's old clothes:*
> *Coat, shirt, and trousers all undone.*
> *I bear my cross upon a hill*
> *In rain and shine, in snow and sun*
> *("The Lonely Scarecrow").*

In a more lighthearted vein, James Reeves tells how "Stocking and shirt/ Can trip and prance, . . ." right off the clothes line in a wild dance with the wind, until they

> *are gone for ever*
> *In the bright blue sky,*
> *And only the hankerchiefs*
> *Wave good-bye ("Stocking and Shirt").*

Kenneth Patchen goes a step further in investing the ordinary with new meaning by advancing an amusing, inventive hypothesis about how two o'clock came to be. His narrative explanation combines clear images, sprightly dialogue, two domestic scenes, one incongruously set in outer space and some mythological creatures:

> *The seventh dragon turned to his wife, . . .*
> *. . . they could see some creatures*
> *Sitting at a big table in the air,*
> *And they were fumbling around*
> *With something that looked like a clock . . .*
> *What time is it, boys? . . .*
> *Make it nice and early, said the dragon;*
> *And his wife called up, That suits me, too.*
> *Then two it is, the creature sang merrily, . .*
> *("Where Two O'Clock Came From").*

Poems can help us view the world of nature in new ways, too. For most people winter suggests whiteness, but for Robert Francis, it appears as an array of blues: "Winter uses all the blues there are./ One shade of blue for water, one for ice,/ Another blue for shadows over snow" ("Blue Winter"). Francis's careful diction creates a strong visual impression of the barren and bleak winter landscape. Moreover, the very sounds of the words themselves elicit the sense of winter's icy chill and the motion and the moaning of the winter wind. In much the same way, Louis NacNeice creates the feel and sound of the wind as he ponders its action, indeed its very nature, in "The Riddle":

> *'What is it that goes round and round the house'*
> *The riddle began. A wolf, we thought, or a ghost?*

Animals can provide interesting subjects for poems. Thom Gunn captures the playful abandon and innate ferocity of cats when the two just-awakened kittens he calls "The Girls" "reenact Ben Hur":

> *Along the corridor,*
> *Wheel, gallop; as they do,*
> *Their noses twitching still,*
> *Their eyes get wild, their bodies tense,*
> *Their usual prudence seemingly withdraws.*
>
> *And then they wrestle: parry, lock paws, . .*
> *("Apartment Cats").*

Poetic inspiration may find its source in animals in the wild, too. Sometimes those creatures easily overlooked or looked down upon, like inelegant toads and despised snakes, or even nature's outcasts, the vultures, may be improved in appearance and enhanced in reputation by the poet's pen. In poetry, toads can be "delicate" and personified to sip "the evening air" (Robert Francis, "Delicate the Toad"), and a snake can become "the love of a thumb/ and forefinger" (William Matthews, "The Snake"). X. J. Kennedy redeems the vulture by wittily emphasizing its utilitarian role in nature with a clever play on words. He portrays the vulture "like a sack" bending

Down to the ground to eat dead cows . . .

and

Thus making up in usefulness
For what he lacks in taste ("Vulture").

Because the poetic eye has a distinct vision of its own, poets

often see the same object or creature in different terms. Comparing these different poetic visions can provide pleasure and open new avenues of thought and perception. Daniel Halpern personifies his pet parrot as a threatening, perhaps murderous, gossip whose colorful plumage belies his true inner nature:

> *gray with bright red*
> *Tail and white chest. Polylingual, our gray*
> *Can mimic the sound of every object: . . .*
> *He has our life down*
> *In his throat . . .*
> *reaches for us in our sleep ("The Gossip").*

Edward Lucie-Smith personifies his parrot, too, but humorously as a mischievous thief that appropriates what he overhears and embarrassingly repeats it,

> *Loud and clear,*
> *And all the neighbors*
> *Know you swear ("The Parrot").*

In sharp, rich images, with, in particular, the phrase "deeper dark" and its companion in rhyme, "meteor spark," Elizabeth Coatsworth captures the elemental, predatory nature of the cat:

> *Now from the dark, a deeper dark,*
> *the cat slides,*
> *furtive and aware,*
> *his eyes still shine with meteor spark,*
> *the cold dew weights his hair ("Calling in the Cat").*

By contrast, Emily Dickinson's cat is a clever hunter who with "twitching" and "hungry" jaws takes deep delight in stalking her prey. At the same time as she describes the cat's calculated movements, Dickinson comments on the complexity and inscrutability of the feline character:

> *She sights a Bird--she chuckles--*
> *She flattens--then she crawls--*
> *She runs without the look of feet--*
> *Her eyes increase to Balls--("She Sights a Bird").*

J. R. R. Tolkien, too, sees his cat as a complex being, the descendant of a noble line of hunters, content now to live in comfortable domesticity. Tolkien's nimble word play creates the sense of the cat's reduced potential for harm, in addition to showing what he looks like. "The fat cat on the mat" now only dreams of a time when an ancestor was a

> *giant lion with iron*
> *claw in paw,*
> *and huge ruthless tooth*
> *in gory jaw; . . ("Cat").*

In poems we can look at things from many different points of view--from the poet's, objectively like Coatsworth, or somewhat ruefully, like Tolkien, or intimately and tenderly, like Mark Van Doren in "Dance Song #6," with the vulnerableness that comes from love freely given:

> *Oh, but I wonder,*
> *Oh, but I know,*
> *Who comforts like raisins,*
> *Who kisses like snow.*

But poems can be from still perspectives, too, such as those of an object or an animal. In poetry, walls can feel; they can even be tickled as in "The Tickle Rhyme" by Ian Serraillier. Though slight in conception, the poem offers an amusingly different vantage point, and at the same time demonstrates the importance of accurate diction and the power of verbal economy. When the wall asks who's tickling his back, the reply comes simply and directly. Says the little "Caterpillar. 'I'm learning/ To crawl.' " In "Nightmare of Mouse," Robert Penn Warren projects a chilling sense of potential evil and also suggests that the mouse is not alone in indulging in self-delusion:

> *It was there, but I said to believe it would take a fool,*
> *And I wasn't, so didn't--till teeth crunched on my skull.*

In poems life can be seen in myriads of ways. In "Nightmare of Mouse," dangers lurk out there, terrible evil, even death, but in "Mother Makes the Biscuits" by the same writer we see a world in which things are calm and orderly and go on much the same way all the time. Although the scene is somewhat old-fashioned, it is one in which we can feel comfortable and safe because it embodies the age-old symbols of security, home, food and family:

> *Mother makes the biscuits,*
> *Father makes the laws,*
> *Grandma wets the bed sometimes,*
> *Kitty-cats have claws.*

On the other hand, this crazy poem is enjoyable, too. Through it we can contemplate from a safe distance a world that seems to have gone completely awry, a world in which the usual rules seem not to apply at all:

> *And, you know, one time the roof came off*
> *and I could see the inside*
> *of everything and everybody,*
> *including me*
>
> *and God, . . (Vassar Millar, "And").*

In "The Hatch," Norma Farber moves a step further and invites readers to think about going out of this world completely, to leave it behind and enter another cosmos altogether:

> *I found myself one day*
> *cracking the shell of sky, . . .*
>
> *I broke from egg of here*
> *into anotherwhere . . .*

Poems like this encourage us to cast aside our old ideas about human capabilities and limitations, discard old notions like worn out or outgrown clothes and put on new ones, and thus open our minds and hearts to new avenues of thought and creative impulse.

Poems, of course, are not only about objects, animals, the world of nature or the state of things. Poems concern people, too, ordinary ones and ones that are unusual as well. In "Old Florist," Theodore Roethke presents a concretely detailed portrait of an old man going about his daily tasks in the greenhouse. The old gardener is sharply individualized. We see what he looks like, as well as what he does, and in such words as "flick and pick" and "one spit" we are given an idea of what his character is like, too:

> *That hump of a man bunching chrysanthemums*
> *Or pinching-back asters, or planting azaleas, . . .*
> *How he could flick and pick*
> *Rotten leaves or yellowy petals, . . .*
> *Or drown a bug in one spit of tobacco juice, . . .*

The old gardener is a skillful practitioner of his craft, though otherwise fairly ordinary. This evening storyteller of Mark Van Doren's has strange and unusual gifts:

> *He talked, and as he talked*
> *Wallpaper came alive;*
> *Suddenly ghosts walked,*
> *And four doors were five; . . ("The Story-Teller").*

Sometimes quite untalented people are the subjects of the poet's inspiration, like Rolfe Humphries's "Junior," a ball-player, who, it seems, is so inept he can't do anything right. On the field he bobbles every ball, and at bat he's no better:

> *. . . at home plate*
> *Junior was a fraud,*
> *Couldn't hit the straightest pitch--*
> *Oh my God!*

As poets' visions and views of life vary, so can the moods of their poems. In Ruth Krauss's

> *The day is so pretty*
> *the umbrella is yellow*
> *the day is so pretty*
> *the sun is so shining*
> *the umbrella is yellow*
> *with white lace all around. . . ("Duet"),*

the sounds glide up and down with liquids and open vowels to give the happy feel, as well as the vivid picture, of children out strolling with a parasol on a brilliantly sunny spring day. The mood of Graves's "The Two Witches" is rollicking; the witches frolic, gambol and shapechange to a square dance rhythm:

> *O sixteen hundred and ninety one,*
> *Never was year so well begun,*
> *Backsy-forsy and inside out,*
> *The best of all years to ballad about*
> *("The Two Witches").*

The rhythms and sounds of "Owl" by George MacBeth are creased and bent and turned back in on themselves to create the sense of an owl's predatory flight through the woods. The poem sends chills up the spine.

> *Owl*
> *is my favoruite. Who flies*
> *like a nothing through the night,*
> *who-whoing. Is a feather*
> *duster in leafy corners ring-a-rosy-ing*
> *boles of mice. . . .*

But poems can create other moods, too, of playfulness:

> *O world of Toms--tomfools, Tom Peppers.*
> *Dark Peeping Toms and Tom-the-Pipers, . .*
> *(Robert Francis, "O World of Toms")*

Or anger, happiness, suspense, sadness or mystery. They can even be pensive and dreamy:

> *I'd much rather sit in the sun the sun*
> *I'd much rather sit in the sun*
> *listening to the shovels scraping*
> *and the birds that whistle on the wires that are*
> *dripping. . (Ruth Krauss, "Song").*

Compassion is still another emotion which poetry with its suggestive language is well-equipped to convey:

> *Forgive me, little antelope,*
> *I kill you so that I may live; . . .*
>
> *May you not be*
> *Too much missed,*
> *Youngest one*
> *That trotted last*
> *(Mark Van Doren, "Indian Hunter").*

Archibald MacLeish said that it is enough for a poem just to be; it doesn't have to do or say anything in particular ("Ars Poetica"). Padriac Colum, on the other hand, said that poetry exists "that we may have an accompaniment to our thoughts--something rhythmical, liberated, of another dimension, going along with our accustomed toil, pastime, and distration" (*Sung Under the Silver Umbrella*, p. x.). Most readers of poems, I think, expect that the poet will do more than just put together pleasing sounds and create interesting pictures. They expect that the poem will say something to them about the ironies, complexities and ambiguities of life in terms of the poet's own experiences and motivate them to respond in terms of experiences of their own. But good poems can do many things. While some poems are playful and tie the generations together at the same time, like this one,

> *I hid the peppermint*
> *Under my pillow*
> *In Grandmother's house*
> *At the top of the stairs. . .*
> *(Mark Van Doren, "I Had to Be Secret"),*

and some poems tell of the harsh realities of life, like this one,

> *"Your father's gone," my bald headmaster said.*
> *His shiny dome and brown tobacco jar*
> *splintered at once in tears. . .*
> *(Edward Lucie-Smith, "The Lesson"),*

still other poems can be gentle and soft, give their readers a lift, and make them feel good,

> *Now I adore my life*
> *With the Bird, the abiding Leaf,*
> *With the Fish, the questing Snail,*
> *And the Eye altering all; . . .*
>
> *And everything comes to One,*
> *As we dance on, dance on*
> *(Theodore Roethke, "Once More, the Round").*

Surely reading and hearing poems like these can give us pleasure. They can also cause us to feel more keenly, to see more sharply and to know ourselves and the world around us better because we have shared in some degree what the poets saw and felt. While imaginative poetry may not make us richer in money, or better morally, or even wiser than we were, and, as Auden suggests, may not even save us from punishment at the hand of the law; it should sharpen our senses, tune us in on the world and keep us from going through life with dull eyes and tin ears.

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A REPORT FROM THE 1986 ALAN WORKSHOP

CELEBRATING YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

The 1986 ALAN Workshop, "Celebrating Young Adult Literature," was held as a post-convention workshop of the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas, November 24-25. As has become a tradition, the ALAN workshop was the largest, in terms of both presenters and participants, of any NCTE post-convention workshop. Eleven authors of young adult books, an editor, over a dozen workshop leaders and over 250 participants from all over the country discussed writing, publishing and teaching young adult books. Below are summaries of several presentations.

The Authors

Zibby Oneal thought that fantasy held no fascination for her. Even as a child realism held a strong appeal. "A good deal of writing goes on in spite of me," she said. "I didn't think that my books had anything to do with fairy tales, but—"

The heroines in fairy tales do have control. Rapunzel didn't have to let down her hair. Cinderella had the other slipper all the time the prince was searching for her, according to Oneal.

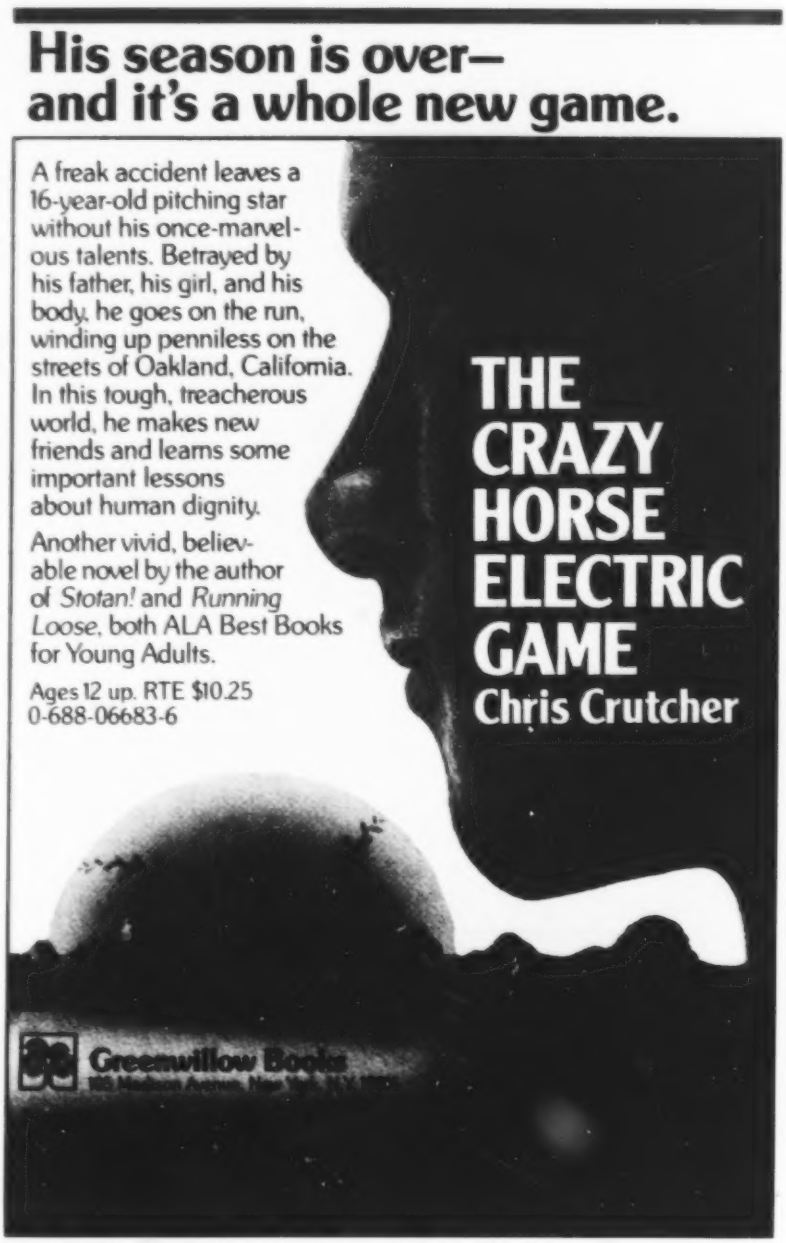
She believes that in both fiction for young adults and fairy tales the protagonist manages to leave the familiar and address the unknown. Her book, *In Summer Light*, for example, might be told as, "Once upon a time, on an island off the coast of Massachusetts. . ." According to Oneal, the protagonist of this novel, Kate, languished as if in a daze similar to that of Sleeping Beauty. Her prince was Ian, a graduate student, who awakens her with a kiss. The Kiss is acknowledgedment of what has already been accomplished, that Kate has grown up and started to see her father as a person not just a father, said the author. The awakening follows what seems to be a period of inaction, but it's really a period of internal change and growth. Although we can't see the change and struggle, we ought not to assume they don't occur.

According to Oneal, fairy tales were the first YA fiction of other times and places. Progaonists in both fight dragons inside and outside themselves.

Judith Keck
Licking County Schools
Newark, Ohio

Meredith Ann Pierce, author of *The Darkangle* and *Birth of the Fire Bringer*, as well as other books of fantasy, provided the audience with a very magical moment in time as she shared with us the elements that combine to create the magical moment in fantasy. She spoke of five elements that need to be present: (1) a premonition, (2) a transition, which can be jarring, but is followed by calm, (3) stillness, (4) disorientation and (5) a sudden sense of heightened awareness. No mere description can recall the magic that she evoked by this beautifully crafed speech presented in a masterful manner.

M. Jean Greenlaw
North Texas State University
Denton, Texas


His season is over—
and it's a whole new game.
A freak accident leaves a 16-year-old pitching star without his once-marvelous talents. Betrayed by his father, his girl, and his body, he goes on the run, winding up penniless on the streets of Oakland, California. In this tough, treacherous world, he makes new friends and learns some important lessons about human dignity.
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THE CRAZY HORSE ELECTRIC GAME
Chris Crutcher
Greenwillow Books

As the winner of the Avon Flare Novel Competition for her novel *Buck*, **Tamela Larimer** talked briefly of her early writing experience and of the writing of *Buck* at age 17. She then read two passages from the book to show how her narrator, Rich Candy, first met Buck and to describe the contending social groups within the high school they attend out of which the novel's conflicts arise.

Hugh Agee
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

An Editor

George Nicholson, Editor-in-Chief and Vice-President, Dell Publishing Company, described elements that go into publishing a book. He reminded the audience that profitability is at the core of publishing. Publishing is a business and not a goodwill exercise.

Five editors work with him in the adolescent literature area. The first element is to have an effective team of editors who know what young people are thinking and doing. The second element is to find writers: new writers who surface through such endeavors as the Delacarte Press Prize contest, experienced writers "in-house" or "stolen" from another house. The third element is sustaining the writers. Element four is fulfilling agreements: developing joint expectations of what is possible; promoting, advertising, identifying the potential market, developing the cover and selling the book. With respect to the latter, he described the importance and influence of book clubs, and the different marketing procedures when working with chain bookstores as opposed to independent ones. The fifth element is establishing the career of a writer, keeping the writer's name before the public.

Among concerns Nicholson noted are racism and censorship. There is a tendency to homogenize, to eliminate offensive possibilities in books before they are published. He commented on the virtual absence, in a plural society, of minority fiction: so few minorities are writing and submitting for publication. He stated that publishers have to work hard at locating minority writers and promoting them. Publishers' responsibilities are many: financial, social, balance in points of view. They recognize they are a piece of the chain and not the entire chain. He believes publishers of young adult literature are inching from a cowardly period to a brave one in which adolescents are treated with respect.

Alan M. McLeod
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

Teaching Young Adult Books

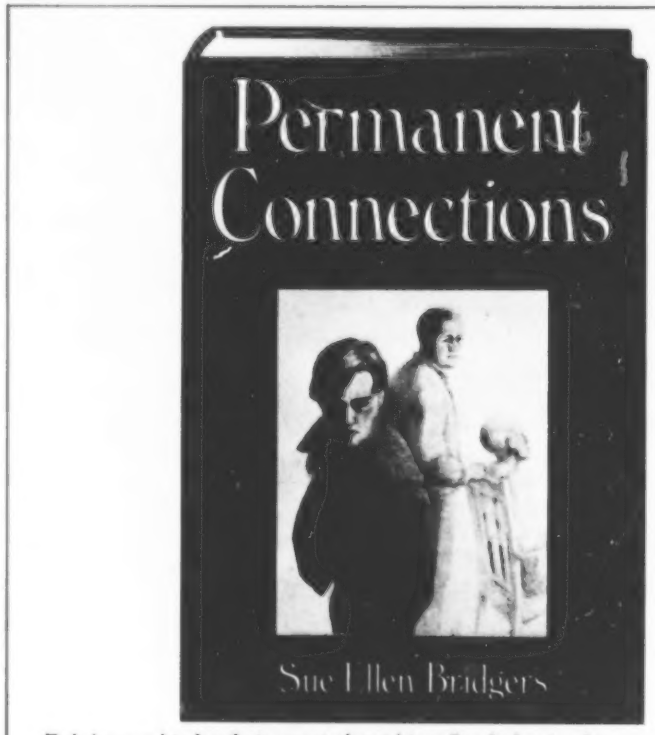
Rachel Reinherd of Jones Middle School in Columbus, Ohio, wants her students to hear, read, write and share the language with their peers. She advocates it works by using YA literature, and her enthusiasm and exhibited student work certainly prove her contention.

The course consists of four to eight thematic units presented throughout the school year. The units are either teacher guided independent projects or teacher directed group projects. The course is designed to provide abundant opportunities for students to read, reflect and respond within the confines of the classroom.

The course materials consist of trade books, periodicals and audio-visuals. The genres and thematic units include mysteries, drama, young adult realistic fiction, survival/courage, historical fiction and nonfiction, biography, and fantasy and science fiction.

Rachel's two handouts show that organization does make it work. She took one example book (M. E. Kerr's *Gentlehands*) and gave a complete day by day break down showing how the four objectives would be integrated and achieved.

C. Anne Webb
Buerkle Junior High School
St. Louis, Missouri



Rob knows his family is upset about his sullen behavior, his poor performance in high school, his fooling around with drugs. But a nameless pain inside him is crying out, and he can obliterate it only by turning away.... Then his parents send Rob to the old family farm, to help take care of his uncle and an assortment of eccentric relatives. It is an arrangement that goes against Rob's grain, until he meets—and falls in love with—a beautiful girl who is also new in the area.

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Helen Heinrich presented a program for reluctant, apathetic junior high school students. Listening skills and vocabulary development were aided through word play. Writing stories and reading the "published" product to younger children built ego and converted indifference to willingness to attempt new challenges. Finding recipes to embellish stories and then converting them into 36 portions added math skills to library skills. Enlisting friends and family in humorous homework and later in many kinds of analogies made the community/school gap narrower.

Storytelling grew out of James Thurber's *Fables for Our Times*. Map skills and conservation evolved from Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphin*. Sue Townsend's *The Diary of Adrian Mole* opened discussion concerning common problems of teenagers. J. R. R. Tolkien's *Father Christmas Letters* taught tongue-in-cheek writing. Peggy Parish and Willard Espy taught the fun of language. Harley Mowat's *Owls in the Family* led to many books dealing with difficulties in caring for wild animals. Students learned to stick to the subject through the themes found in all ABC books.

Speaking in groups began with learning to tell stories--many versions of a story were read. A com-

posite was written, and when it felt "good" the student told his/her peers.

The group scores on vocabulary and comprehension were up an average of three grade levels at the end of the year. Reading and writing assignments were accepted as an exciting challenge. Word work became word play.

Helen Heinrich
Adelphi University
Long Island, New York

Jean Tittle's (Gull Lake Middle School, Kalamazoo, Michigan) goal is to get students to delve below the surface of a book, to respond emotionally to it and to notice artistry. She offered her audience valuable guides that included her system for reporting on books.

During each grading period, each student must give one oral presentation. The person reads the oral report, shares a copy of the book with classmates and answers three questions posed by the group. The written portion focuses on a different aspect of a book each nine weeks: chapter beginnings, dialogue and characterization. A second part offers the reader's personal evaluation and reaction to the book.

Anne Sherrill
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, Tennessee

M. Jean Greenlaw followed Meredith Ann Pierce's speech with a discussion of how to teach fantasy. She delineated the differences between high and low fantasy and shared curriculum materials used over a three year period with different classes of students. These materials, developed with Margaret E. McIntosh, make use of a modification of William's Model and center on aspects of critical thinking, inference and metaphor.

M. Jean Greenlaw
North Texas State University
Denton, Texas

In her small group session entitled "Strong Female Characters in High Fantasy Literature for Young Adults," **Meggin McIntosh** (North Texas State University) described a project in which she and M. Jean Greenlaw are currently involved. This spring, McIntosh and Greenlaw will spend six weeks working with high school students on a unit involving high fantasy literature with strong female characters. During the first two weeks, students will be introduced to paired works by three authors of high fantasy: *God Stalk* and *Dark of the Moon* by P. C. Hodgell, *The Darkangel* and *A Gathering of Gargoyles* by Meredith Ann Pierce, and *The Blue Sword* and *The Hero and the Crown* by Robin McKinley. During this time, students will also complete pre-reading activity sheets, focusing on literary device and technique, designed to augment thinking skills necessary for reading high fantasy.

During the next two weeks, students will choose one pair of books to read and work on activity sheets devised to enhance and extend their reading experiences. Follow-up activities will pull the unit together during the last two weeks of the project. Not just skill and drill, the activity sheets are carefully constructed to develop readers' critical reading skills and creative thinking. Some titles for activity sheets include: "Introduction Techinques," "Forced to Choose," "Benefit/Cost of Decisions" and "Facts without the Sense of Them."

McIntosh stressed that both boys and girls enjoy high fantasy with strong female characters because they are "captured by the story."

Elizabeth Poe
Arvada West High School
Arvada, Colorado

Hollis Lowery-Moore's (Sam Houston State University) research on mother-daughter relationships reveals: (1) daughters must accept their connectedness with as well as their separateness from their mothers; (2) most adolescents resent arbitrary authority; (3) most daughters do not resent strictness but they do resent being put down; (4) autonomy and friendship are possible; (5) mothers need to have a good sense of autonomy and still be able to demonstrate friendship. The speaker then discussed mother-daughter relationships in selected young adult novels (e.g.: Hila Coleman's *Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother* and Zibby Oneal's *A Formal Feeling*), and offered as a classroom application an overview of a unit with sample activities.

Hugh Agee
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

Picture Books are too often relegated to preschool and primary grade children while at the same time many picture books have been criticized for being inappropriate for very young children, said **Inga Kromann-Kelly**. Discussing a project which was an outcome of a folk literature class she was teaching at Washington State University, Kromann-Kelly suggested that picture books are inaccessible to most young people of junior and senior high school age, both because these books are not familiar to librarians and teachers who work at this level, and because the books are not in libraries in junior and senior high schools. Many of these books, however, are like poetry and say much in few words, or in no words at all, and the communication through literary and visual art has as great, if not greater, impact as texts with words alone.

During the past year the members of Kromann-Kelly's folk literature class selected picture books which were appropriate and appealing for grades other than pre-school and primary and used them in upper level classrooms. Sharing a bibliography which listed 39 titles, Kromann-Kelly selected a few to display and discuss. Several of these are shared here.

Dakota Dugout by Ann Turner was selected for its crispness of language, while Bird Baylor's *Hawk, I'm Your Brother* and *The Sea People* by Jorg Muller are good examples of books which portray environmental concerns. *Rabbit Island*, also by Jorg Muller demonstrates how different people see different things in what they read. Kromann-Kelly recounted the story of a father of a five year old who was horrified by the book which described a rabbit factory in which rabbits were well fed, then slaughtered. Yet his five-year-old son loved it.

Molly Bang's *Dawn*, a modern mystical *Crane Maiden*, was used by ninth graders who compared it with original versions to see the similarities and connections.

Poetry, too, was included, with *Season Songs* by Ted Hughes, *Sky Songs* and *A Circle of Seasons* by Myra Cohn Livingston being examples.

Shirley B. Ernst
Stafford Springs, Connecticut

Margaret Sacco Miami University, Oxford, Ohio) practiced what she preaches by using a slide presentation to share with her small group session audience the various ways that audio-visual media can be used in motivating young adults to read. The first point made in her talk was how teachers and media specialists can work together in the promotion of reading. Proceeding from this point, Sacco showed slides of activities such as reading aloud with sound effects, silent booktalks, games and puzzles while giving verbally the information on how each was produced and used in the classroom. Her extensive handout included commercially available media resources, how to make slides, examples of newsletters and booktalks, and books on cassette, film and mircrocomputers.

Rosemary Oliphant Ingham
University of Houston - Clear Lake

There are lots of children and young adults; there are lots of good books. We all know this. What we don't always know is how to get the two together, but **Diane Tuccillo** (Mesa Public Librarian, Mesa, Arizona) solved the problem by sharing numerous ideas for the partnership. She began her small group session by modeling two booktalks, and proceeded to give guidelines for booktalks as well as other successful methods for hooking children (of all ages) on books. Many of the ideas presented have been used in the Mesa Public Library where Tuccillo is Young Adult Services Librarian. Throughout her talk she referred to her eight pages of references and resource materials with topics that ranged from booklists to various ways of enticing young readers into books and into public libraries. Also included in the handouts were examples of newsletters from Mesa and New York City libraries for young adults.

Rosemary Oliphant Ingham
University of Houston - Clear Lake

POLITICS, POETRY AND TEACHING: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

Arnold Adoff
Yellow Springs, Ohio

I was born and raised in the East Bronx section of New York; went to various schools there; lived and taught and wrote for 12 years until 1969, when I was kidnapped and forced to move to some idea of America called Ohio.

I have published 25 books for children, young adults and their older allies: about half that number are anthologies, mainly concentrating on work by Afro-American poets and young writers of all backgrounds. In the past ten years I have made a concentrated effort to create a body of work: a family of young voices, through collections of my own poetry, that speak to, and through, the times of youth. My young people play sports and eat flying oatmeal cookies and search for inter-racial identities, and care about a solid hug. I have become adept with a chainsaw, out in Ohio, and I can grow equal numbers of Better Boy and Better Girl tomatoes in that good Ohio dirt.

Beyond geography and agriculture, I have been on a long journey from my own childhood in New York City. Sometimes I used to think I was some alien "superboy," living as a spy in a city whose parents arrived some time earlier on steerage rockets from a dying planet. (Chocolate was my own personal Kryptonite.) This was the New World, as well as *a* new world. And while we always waited for the next *pogrom* to turn the corner of 172nd Street and Boston Road, and head down our block, we scratched through the structures and institutions, attitudes and sociology, to find home, place and purpose.

Certainly the overriding influences on my vision of the world, and some sense of purpose in this new world of America, began, really, before I was born. With the Stalin Purges, the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the beginnings of the palpable insanity of the Holocaust, the world war, we were forever marked: as survivors, as Jews, as Americans. The home planet had been destroyed, along with most of its population, our history and kin. And that magnificent potential of Economic Socialism, that idea of social justice and self-determination within a Democratic framework – that alternative had also been destroyed for our time, certainly for mine. Even with the creation of the State of Israel, we were still Americans–studying, writing, teaching–forever enmeshed in the social, political and economic tangle of a contradictory, fascinating, and exciting place. And if the rockets could never return to Europe, for my grandparents, and my parents, for me there was no desire to leave.

If America has ever meant anything beyond an artifically high standard of living for a large middle class, it has meant possibility, and potential for change. When I studied at City College and Columbia University, with the Faculty of Political Science, I became quite aware of the restrictive and narrow view of an America held by most of my professors, contained in my texts. I was drawn to Harry Hopkins, the New Deal, those insanely wonderful "100 Days of Change" that happened directly after Franklin Roosevelt assumed the office of President in 1933, in the midst of real danger to the democratic structure of this country. Of course I was a young poet and history student in an America of Joe McCarthy, the House Un-American Activities Committee, red-baiting witch-hunts, and the seeming inability of the "power structure" or the press to challenge and defend.

But beyond "Beat," beyond "Hip," beyond "Jazz," was the developing Civil Rights Movement, and the beginning of the struggles for equality and social justice that were the high points of that time. And if destruction of the alternative of Socialism, and the destruction of millions of humans by other humans, shaped my early years, then the ultimate failure of the disparate efforts of the sixties to create *real change* in the structure of this society was the third great influence on my own development and view.

I have worked to create collections of Black American poetry for young readers: in attempts to help us reach some level of multiracial/multi-cultural reality in our culture, in our literature–to go beyond the so-called "American" literature texts I encountered as student and teacher. If I am the ultimate integrationist in my own life, then I have also created integrated collections of urban poetry, poems by young poets from all racial and geographic backgrounds. It there is a force behind my work for young people, it is this force for change. If there is a metaphor for my life and work, then it is some juggling, shuffling, middle-class/middle-aged clown on the low slack rope, juggling those Indian clubs: of meaning/music; balancing symmetrical form, truth, beauty and some new American way! If all the parallel cultures and literatures of all the Americas are not presented with force and conviction, then no part of the so-called American children's literature is true; *all* must fall like some house of cards built on partial foundations. And even in the lush times of the 1960s, the time of federal funding, expanding children's books departments and lists each season–even in these best of times, we saw that less than one percent of the publishing output was by and about Black America, as only one example, let alone the conservative ten percent that is in keeping with the usual demographics.

Today the basic structure of the publishing industries remains unchanged, as does its view of American literature. When my *Black Is Brown Is Tan* was published in 1973, it was reprinted in *Ms. Magazine's* "Stories For Free Children" to great response. But no flood, or even trickle, of books dealing with the many varieties of family life in this country was to follow from other publishers. Even with this small break-through, the stopping point occured after that one small step: the Black/White world of that book and its particulars. Ten years later I was required to find another publisher for the "sequel" collection, *All the Colors of the Race*, despite continuing success for *Black Is Brown Is Tan*. To this day, these two books, along with Virginia Hamilton's novel, *Arilla Sun Down*, are three out of a list of five or six (!) titles that the Council on Interracial Books For Children is able to recommend to those who inquire after such artistic realities. Whether we look at book titles and subjects, or the faces of editors, executives, academics, in the various aspects of our "young literature," we see a failure of "voluntary compliance," self examination, parity, equality, commitment, concern, justice. The cards are falling around our heads.

It is and has always been a struggle to publish poetry in this country. It is, of course, a struggle to publish it still; and in children's literature, these efforts are also directed to overcome the inertia-producing past success of *bland verse*, and the over-

riding desire to make money with quick prose. I go to my typewriter each early morning and repeat my mantra: "America is a Capitalist society (and I am part of it), America is a Capitalist society (and I am part of it), America is a Capitalist society (and I am part of it)." I take a quick look at the latest *Publisher's Weekly*, and plunge into some *probable* world of my own, beyond aproned bears and the quick and easy rhyme. The need of the poet to help mold a complete reality through control of technique and imagination—his "craft and sullen art"—butts up against the need of the editor and publisher to: (a) survive, (b) create profit on her or his line of the computer print-out sheet on the desk of the group president, (c) create the "products" that will delight an increasingly restrictive nation of consumers and (d) compete with Prince and Bruce Springsteen for the "leisure" dollar.

But the great value for a poet in publishing for children is that ready market librarians and teachers for his good work. My books usually do not do battle with the latest Stephen King, Barbara Cartland, Sweet Dreams romance, Norman Mailer or Virginia Hamilton for profit-margin-per-square-foot-of-floor-space in the book stores of America. And while instances of censorship and repression are on the increase, there is also a new generation of young professionals and parents, concerned and eager for young readers to experience real writing, real young voices, a reality of a better America in a "reachable" future. I leave my home and typewriter and tomatoes, each fall and spring, to travel a good deal: visiting schools and libraries, talking with these professionals, these parents, working with young readers and young authors. Sometimes I am a spy in the houses of lies, the houses of death. I can enter a school and find all my materials still bundled up in a dusty corner of the room, the teachers sitting in chill silence, wearing their coats, as my well-meaning "host" and I attempt some thaw of frozen attitudes and imagination. Sometimes I find myself in all-white communities which have grown only to the point of being able to invite a non-Black anthologist of Black Poetry to work with their kids. Sometimes I am in all-Black schools, community centers, neighborhood libraries, as some "exotic" representation of other Americans, an idea of an other America. I see the ill-clothed, the ill-housed, the ill-fed. I see kids hungry for hope, and kids just plain hungry.

If I have been blessed with some of that small minority of children's books editors who have some imagination beyond the safe and traditional versified bunny and the ossified narrative, then I have been equally blessed with the good fortune to visit exciting and imaginative classrooms, libraries—to see children's literature *used*. And it is the reinforcement of the *utilitarian* nature of my work, that use-for-the-possibility-of-change-of moving a kid's head from point A to point B, no matter in which America that head hits pillow each night—which allows this poet for the young to continue the various struggles: (1) upstream, against the profit motive (or, perhaps, to find ways to subvert and integrate and flow with that great force); (2) with a dwindling number of imaginative editors; (3) and with the great, visceral and anti-Darwinian (and really unnatural) need on the part of publishers, educators and school superintendents to desire a *replication* of the existing, a literature and education for the unimaginative and unjust status quo; a reactive "moving backward, retrenching into materials and methods," as James Moffett has written, "long since tried and found untrue" (1985). If the state dreams and imagines, it imagines itself.

And, finally, I am a spy in the house of love. So let me conclude with the story of "the two Peggies" (Chapman, 1985). In the tiny town of Mt. Victory, in Central Ohio, hidden between unlikely Ohio hills, full of soy bean and corn farmers, small merchants and Amish farmers still riding horse and buggy rigs, there is a truly-red-brick American school building in the middle of this area of America. The two Peggies, teachers Peggy Harrison and Peg Reed, hired a carpenter, knocked out a wall or two, built booths for individual instruction, student research, voice and video recording and created a large area for exciting and innovative education: for rich, full days in the midst of traditional school situations. There are no textbooks, there are no basal readers and kits and boxes and cards and duplicating machines spewing work sheets and assignments. The whole day is spent, with these fifth and sixth graders, in the *use* of books, *real* books, of all kinds, about all subjects that are in the standard curricula, and beyond. And the days are also spent in writing, and rewriting, stories and poems, on any and all subjects. Adults "direct" to research sources, insights, lines of thought. But the young readers and writers are free to follow those directions, those lines of thought and written expression, as they develop and grow and change.

I know about this place because these farmers and merchants, every other year, slaughter some hogs. Their wives (in the traditional division of labor in that America) create some of the finest sausage north of Tennessee. Together with the young students, they sell the sausage, along with cakes and pies and home-made chocolates, to raise the funds for this vegetarian poet to spend two days working and playing and writing and rewriting along with them, in that happy room. I do love this irony of least-of-change happening in least-changed-corner-of-Ohio. And there are many other "Peggies," other rooms full of real books, and love of language; teachers willing (even eager) to take chances, even in these Falwellian times; other stories far too long for the telling.

If some parts of America children's literature only exist to survive and create corporate profit, and repeat: if some parts of the various ideas of the various Americas only exist to replicate and clone another generation of unquestioning and unimaginative Amercians; then there are also editors and publishers who continue a dedication to fine literature and young readers: a support of books, like poetry, plays, certain nonfiction, which sell steadily but slowly, all in the face of the Thor Power Tool Decision of the present federal administration—look that one up for homework—and the need for quick positive cash flow on the part of the accountants and managers and stockholders. This *is* a time of chaos, and I am glad I am still on that original journey on this new planet, despite the flashes, rumbles, ground-shaking shudders: my book of *Chocolate Dreams* is too "sweet" for the California healthies, my interracial kids too "real" for the Texas toughies. Even if I am juggling between the Pro-Gablers and the anti-gobblers, it is a good place for a poet to shake and dance.

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YA BOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM
(Three Articles on Teaching Poetry)

SEVEN MYTHS ABOUT TEACHING POETRY, OR, HOW I STOPPED CHASING FOUL BALLS

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As a weak-hitting, third-string catcher on our Little League team, poetry was the farthest thing from my mind. I wanted to play baseball. Alas, I was put into games when they were out of hand. Or, I was put into games when the opposing pitcher was Harry "The Roach" Rochette, a 13-year-old who shaved, smoked Lucky Strikes and, some kids swore, drove his father's DeSota. The Roach sneered as he threw strikes. Or, I was put into games when our manager wanted to utilize my special talent: hitting foul balls. While I rarely hit the ball between the white lines, I was a master of the foul ball. So when the coach wanted to stall, in an attempt to have the game called on account of darkness or to wait for a real hitter to arrive, I got the call.

One drawback to my talent was that it was difficult to change when I was in a pick-up game. I managed to hit more fair balls in those games, but I still hit my shares of balls that would pop over the back stop, hit the street and bounce into Mrs. Ford's yard, a jungle of bushes and overgrown grass. Of course, the rule of the diamond was: You hit it over the fence; you go get it. It didn't take me long to tire of climbing the fence to go combing through Mrs. Ford's front yard.

One day all that changed. That was the day her mongrel, Baxter, charged out of the house. I grabbed the ball and tore out of there, scratching my arm on a rose bush and ripping my pants on the fence. When I got back to the diamond, the myth of Baxter, the Killer Dog, was born. My wound and ruined pants were proof enough that Baxter was not to be messed with. My friends decided to use the rattiest ball when I came to bat, so if it flew into Baxter's lair, it was no big loss. Which was fine with me. I was tired to chasing foul balls.

The experience comes to mind when I think of the myths we sometimes create when we are faced with teaching something with which we don't feel at ease. If you filled Fenway Park with English teachers and asked them to raise their hands if they felt comfortable teaching poetry, I'd bet the hands would be almost as scarce as Red Sox pennants in the last 60 years. And I admit, it took me nearly half my teaching career to feel that I was doing a reasonably good job teaching poetry to young people.

When I started working on poetry anthologies ten years ago, I began to see new ways to teach poetry. I faced the myths, which, in many cases, were excuses for not teaching poetry well. Many teachers face poetry with the same dread I felt when I knew I had to retrieve another foul ball. I teach poetry with more confidence these days, having confronted some of the myths connected with that task.

Myth 1: Only Certain Teachers Can Teach Poetry Well.

This myth is correct, but, as they say, it ain't right. Only certain teachers *CAN* teach poetry well, but it's not that difficult to be one of those teachers. To begin with, the teacher who expects to teach poetry well must read poetry. And not just the stuff that's in the classroom anthology, the stuff we're expected to "cover." I happen to agree with James Dickey who said that poetry is "just naturally the greatest goddamn thing that ever was in the whole universe. If you love it, there's no substitute for it." Because I love poetry, I believe that it deserves a place in our student's lives, not just in our curriculum. I want my students to read poetry on their own when they are no longer in my class or in my school. But before I can expect that from them, I must expect that from myself.

Myth 2: Modern Poetry Is Impossible To Understand.

While some modern poetry *IS* impossible to understand, much of it is delightfully accessible. I've tried to include such poetry in my anthologies, and I invite the reader to browse through them. You will find contemporary poets whose work may engage today's young readers, and that's another reason why they should be included in our curriculum. Let's not wait for their work to be part of the once-again popular, nine-pound classroom anthologies. Let's go out and find good poets to share with our students. Let me offer a list of books worth reading. In a world with few real guarantees, I can guarantee that you will find some poems in these books that will generate interest, if not downright excitement in your students.

Robert Currie, *Yarrow* (Oberon Press)
Alice Fulton, *Dance Script With Electric Ballerina* (University of Pennsylvania Press)
Gary Gilder, *Blue Like The Heaven: New and Selected Poems* (University of Pennsylvania Press)
Judith Hemschemeyer, *Very Close and Very Slow* (Wesleyan University Press)
Ted Kooser, *Sure Signs: New and Selected Poems* (University of Pittsburgh Press)
Maxine Kumin, *Our Ground Time Here Will Be Brief* (Penguin)
Stanley Kunitz, *The Poems of Stanley Kunitz* (Atlantic/Little, Brown)
Robert Morgan, *At The Edge of the Orchard Country* (Wesleyan University Press)
Linda Pastan, *PM/AM: New and Selected Poems* (Norton)
Marge Piercy, *Circles on the Water* (Knopf)

Mary Swander, *Driving The Body Back* (Knopf)
William Stafford, *Stories That Could Be True* (Harper & Row)
John Updike, *Facing Nature* (Knopf)
Mark Vinz, *Climbing The Stairs* (Spoon River Poetry Press)
Ronald Wallace, *Tunes For Bears To Dance To* (University of Pittsburgh Press)
Baron Wormser, *Good Trembling* (Houghton Mifflin)
Paul Zimmer, *Family Reunion* (University of Pittsburgh Press)

Myth 3: Poetry Units Must Be Three Or Four Weeks Long For Students To Get The Most Out Of Poetry. (Myth 3a: Poetry Units Should Be Taught/Work Best In The Spring, Usually May.)

Poetry units MAY be long, for sure, but there's no law demanding it. In fact, one of the wonderful things about poetry is that so many poems are short; students can read a complete literary work (a couple of times, in fact) in a class period and still have time to discuss it.

Poems can fit into a lesson almost any time, which isn't to say that we should use a poem merely as a "filler." No, we must have a reason for reading a poem. We can read a couple of relevant poems in connection with a short story or a novel. When my ninth graders have finished reading Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, I might introduce some of these poems:

"Dog's Death," John Updike
"A History of Pets," David Huddle
"Elegy," Howard Nemerov
"Pa," Leo Dangel
"Edwin A. Nelms," Sheryl L. Nelms
"My Mother's Death," Judith Hemschemeyer

We don't need to "cover" every poem we share with our students. We should spend more time reading poems aloud. We can ask for a reaction, a comment or a question on the poem, then let it go at that. Read sports poems when your school is caught up in the frenzy of the basketball tournament. Read apple poems in the fall, early morning poems to your first period class and spring poems when winter won't let go. How about ending the class before lunch with a food poem? Or, funny poems when somebody (you?) needs a lift? Read a peace poem anytime. Quickies like these may help demystify poetry and make it more a part of life. The books I mentioned above are great places to begin looking for the Occasional Poem.

Of course, there's a middle ground between the Quickie and the four-week poetry unit. Try groups of three, four or five poems written about a similar topic. In my anthologies, I have clustered poems that deal with teeth, suicide, food, movies, swimming, insomnia, gluttons, dentists, cemeteries, love, families, war victims, cars, cats and gnats, to name some of the topics. The possibilities are limitless. You might teach a group of poems written in the same form (e.g.; sonnets, list poems, monologues, dialogues). A third type of group--functions of poems--might help our students see that poetry has a purpose other than to puzzle, intimidate and infuriate. With some digging and reading, you can come up with poems that fantasize, ("House-Hunting," David Wagoner), memorialize ("Death's Blue-Eyed Girl," Linda Pastan), describe ("A Field Poem," Laura Valaitis), celebrate ("The Gift," Ed Ochester), confess ("The Sunday News," Dana Gioia), lament ("Beaver Moon--The Suicide of a Friend," Mary Oliver), instruct ("To Build a Poem," Christine E. Hemp), praise ("A Poet's Farwell to His Teeth," James Dickey), remember ("A Kitchen Memory," Roy Scheele), address ("Letter to a Substitute Teacher," Gary Gildner), narrate ("Cousin Ella Goes to Town," George Ella Lyon), amuse ("Constipation," Philip Dacey), console ("For My Brother Who Died Before I Was Born," Baron Wormser) and commemorate ("Zimmer's Head Thudding Against the Blackboard," Paul Zimmer).

Presenting a group of poems that describe or praise or console may not fit into the curriculum you are following. I say "So what?" Having our kids read poetry on their own when they leave our classrooms seems to be a higher priority than following the curriculum while they're in our classrooms. Kids need to experience poetry, to feel, as Philip Booth does, that a good poem "makes the world more habitable . . . it stretches not toward mere pleasure, but toward joy. It changes the world slightly in favor of being alive and being human."

Myth 4: Poetry Works Best With Older/Younger Students. (Myth 4a: Poetry Works Best With Smarter Students.)

This seems the same as saying, "Fiction works best with older /younger students." The key with poetry, as with any classroom activity, is to find material that is appropriate for our students. With all students, but particularly with younger or less motivated students we need to begin with simpler concepts and simpler poems. There should be a sequence to our study of poetry that works from the simple to the complex, from word play to sophisticated analysis. But regardless of the students we are working with, we must remember one thing: the poem must be the center of our activities. Literary terms must be taught inductively. Lives of the poets must remain just that, and not a substitute for a close reading of the poems. A study of the historical background is best left to the social studies teacher. The poem. Always the poem.

Myth 5: There Is No Connection Between Reading Poetry And Writing Poetry.

You're right. I can't disprove this myth. However, I think students who play with language, who try to write poetry might have insight when they read poetry that non-writers won't have. By trying to say something poetically, students may explore form, language, images, structure, rhythm, voice, sound and feelings, concepts they will encounter in the poems they read. Perhaps, too, trying to say something poetically will help demystify poetry. It deserves a more prominant place in our classroom.

Rollo May wrote that creativity takes courage because "an active battle with the gods is occurring." As a poetry anthologizer, I've seen the fruits of many such battles. As teacher of English, I share those fruits with my students. But I want more than that. I want my students--on their own level, in their own way--to battle the gods, to see, as Robert Francis noted, "One cannot strikes sparks from itself; it takes at least two for that. It takes words lying side by side to breed wonders." The choices we can give our students are nearly limitless. Kids can begin writing metaphors and similes, examples of personification, their own nursery rhymes. Beyond that, our students can write elegies, parodies, rondeaus and plain odes, clerihew, haiku, epigrams and epitaphs, concrete poems, found poems, synonym poems, acrostic poems, light verse, blank verse, free verse, lyrics, limericks, and epics, couplets, tercets, and sonnets, refrians and quatrains. Not all students should write all these forms, of course, but they are possibilities that are worth exploring.

I try to create an atmosphere in my classroom that encourages word play. I hope my class is a place where kids are not afraid to experiment with language or share their feelings and work. I want each kid in my class to know it's okay for him/her to be, as Dylan Thomas called himself, a "freak user of words."

We need to publish student poetry. The literary magazine is an obvious place, but surely not the only place for poetry. The school newspaper might be interested in a poem or two. So, too,

the town newspaper. Beyond that, we can print poems on broadsheets and handouts. We can make poetry posters. Anything to give poetry a more public areana, to bring poets and readers together.

Myth 6: There Aren't Very Many Places To Find Good Ideas About Teaching Poetry To Young Readers.

It used to be that study guides and teacher's editions of textbooks were the most common places to get ideas about teaching poetry. All too frequently, however, those suggestions engendered no more excitement and delight than the poems themselves. Fortunately, that has changed. Some highly creative educators have been putting a great deal of energy into designing new strategies for teaching poetry. There are a number of books from which I have borrowed frequently. Let me acknowledge those books by suggesting you seek them out and consider what they might offer you and your students.

Neil Baldwin, *The Poetry Writing Handbook* (Scholastic)
Charles R. Duke & Sally A. Jacobsen, *Reading and Writing About Poetry: Successful Approaches* (Oryx Press)
Florence Grossman, *Getting From Here To Here* (Boynton)
Sandra Hochman, *Streams* (Prentice-Hall)
X. J. Kennedy & Dorothy M. Kennedy, *Knock At A Star* (Little, Brown)
Elizabeth McKim, *Beyond Words: Writing Poems With Children* (Wampeter Press)
Alberta Turner, *How To Make A Poem* (Longman)
Robert Wallace, *Writing Poetry* (Little, Brown)

Myth 7: All Students Should Enjoy Poetry.

For a poetry lover/teacher, this is the toughie. But, let's face it; not everyone is going to enjoy any one thing, be it John Coltrane, Bon Jovi, soap operas or math. Poetry is no exception. However, the poetry lover/teacher will do everything s/he can to lead young people to good poetry. By exploring poetry, the students will have an opportunity to taste the richness of a good poem. The rest is up to them and to forces out of our control. We must not be discouraged, if our hard work doesn't reach every student. The trick is to feel joy for every student we have helped become a poetry reader.

I've always wondered why baseball was such a popular subject for poets--from Marianne Moore to William Matthews, from Donald Hall to May Swenson. Even William Shakespeare wrote about baseball. A little known fact, but check it out: "There is three umpires in the matter I understand" (*Merry Wives of Windor*, I, i, 137); "Passion, I see, is catching" (*Julius Caesar*, III, i, 283), "But, sirrah, make haste, Percy is already in the field" (Henry IV, IV, ii, 74-5). I've even asked some poets why they wrote more poems about baseball than about any other sport. The answers rambled through childhoods, ideas of symmetry and notions of immortality. But the answers did have one common thread: baseball, though a team sport, was a battle of individuals. One on one. Pitcher, at his crafy best, trying to fool a batter, who wants one thing: to hit it where they ain't. I take comfort in that notion, realizing, perhaps, that all those days hitting foul balls were really preparing me to be an anthologizer and teacher, and to serve young people poem after poem right over the heart of the plate.

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Poetspeak: In Their Work, About Their Work, Bradbury Press, 1983.
Strings: A Gathering of Family Poems, Bradbury Press, 1984.
Pocket Poems, Bradbury Press, 1985
Going Over To Your Place: Poems For Each Other, Bradbury Press, 1987.
This Delicious Day, Orchard Books/Franklin Watts, 1987.

Nonfiction

Loads of Codes and Secret Ciphers, Macmillan, 1984.

Fiction

Bridges To Cross, Macmillan, 1986.

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EXPERIENCING POETRY: AN EXPANDED VIEW

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In their Preface to *Reading and Writing Poetry: Successful Approaches for the Student and Teacher* (1983), Duke and Jacobsen write:

> For too long, far too many students have considered poetry as some mysterious artifact, meant to be observed at a distance always, under the eye of a critical curator. But this distancing is contrary to all we now know about how readers develop a liking for various types of literature. Growth comes from direct engagement, not from any distancing of reader and text. We believe, therefore, that the teaching of poetry needs an expanded view which emphasizes student interaction with the text, as well as creation of new texts. (p. vii)

Definitions of poetry range from Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and "emotion recollected in tranquility" to elementary school children's perception of poetry as something that rhymes (Fisher, 1986). Between these extremes lies a broad spectrum of poetic experiences that can accommodate the sensitivities and language levels of young people. This article examines ways in which individual students may discover an entry point on this continuum from which they may begin to exercise those capabilities which will promote growth and understanding.

Gillespie (1979) has discovered that attempting to define poetry in his classroom is in itself a useful approach to recognition of what poetry is (or isn't). Using stem sentences such as *Poetry is like. . .* or *Poetry is. . .*, Gillespie introduces students to simile and metaphor, "two of the main tools in the poet's small tool kit" (p. 41). Metaphor-making is a valuable first step in introducing students to poetry writing.

Streepey (1987) reminds us, however, that good poems are not easy to write or to read. "Through reading, poetry students see how each word works in the fabric of the poem and why it must be that word and no other" (pp. 58-59). She emphasizes the importance of images as her students learn to distinguish between good and bad poems. "In good poems, we have to imagine with poets something of their lives. We have to see specific experience through another person's eyes" (p. 61).

Burton (1970) identifies a hierarchy of skills essential in students gaining a "felt knowledge" in reading literature. Initially students must achieve some form of imaginative entry, or empathy, which precedes their perception of meaning or central purpose in a poem. There follows an awareness of artistic unity and significance, which signals a new level of maturity in readers. However, for Burton, students who do not achieve imaginative entry -- Burton speaks of a "correlative experience" -- are not reading literature. Rosenblatt (1978) underscores this point in her distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading, the latter characterizing personal engagement which engenders Burton's "felt knowledge."

Experience is at the core of imaginative entry. Trout (1974) sums up the poetry experience as "the student looking for a way to talk about his life: where he has been, who he is now, and what he hopes to become" (p. 104). Research in response to literature teaches us that it is not just life experience that matters, but a whole matrix of factors, one of which is prior experience with literature.

Young children delight in the manipulation of sounds and images in literature, something that appears to fade in many young people as they move into the teen years. Some of my students have intimated that the way their teachers have approached poetry in the classroom has had an impact on them. Among reasons students cite are having to learn the mechanics of verse for scanning poems, learning all about the author's life, reading only the teacher's favorite poems and finding *the* meaning of each poem. Those who have suffered through memory exercise on the mechanics of poetry will find the madcap glossary of poetic terms put together by Elk Grove, Illinois, High School English teachers (1979) a bit of comic relief (e.g., *iambic*, a poem written with a ball-point pen; *synechdoche*, a poem about a city in New York).

Research tells us that students' poetry preferences from the elementary school (Fisher and Natarella, 1982; Terry, 1974) through high school (Nelms, 1967; Bryan and Agee, 1979) are consistent in some ways, but vary in others. Humorous poetry appears to be a favorite at all levels; haiku tends to be among the least liked forms. On the latter point, however, it appears that many students enjoy writing their own haiku (Esbensen, 1975; Kirby and Liner, 1981; Terry, 1974). Terry (p. 52) concludes that when students hear haiku written by Japanese poets they have difficulty understanding the abstractions of the form. Bryan and Agee report that students did not like haiku's brevity and its apparent lack of meaning.

Students at every level find narrative poems and limericks interesting, but there are differing reports on preferences for rhyme in poetry. Young children prefer rhyme, but in surveys of high school students, Nelms's (1967) subjects expressed no preference for poems with regular rhyme schemes. Those in the Bryan and Agee survey of tenth, eleventh and twelth graders preferred rhymed verse.

There are other similarities and differences across grade levels that might be discussed, such as varying preferences for traditional and modern verse, but to do so here would be a digression from the purpose of this paper. The point is that teachers must be flexible in their selection of poetry for their students. As Terry says, "teachers' choices rarely reflect students' prior experience with poetry at their current level of enjoyment" (p. 58). Teachers should be prepared to invite students to share their own preferences and, in Dunning's words, "to say something poetic" (1966).

To further the interaction with poetry texts means that readers must have access to a wide variety of poems. I urge teachers to develop their personal portfolio of poems they consider suitable

for their students and to have on hand in the library anthologies of poems in which students can browse. (See Table 1.)

Table 1 Poetry Resources

Some Names to Look For

Finding sources of suitable poems for young adults beyond the traditional canons of British and American literature is not as difficult as some students and teachers think. The following list of poets and/or anthologists has served me well. It is not all-inclusive, but my students who want to read more modern poetry have found it helpful (and they discover even more once they get started).

Arnold Adoff	Paul Janeczko
Maya Angelou	Kenneth Koch
Robert Bly	Maxine Kumin
Richard Brautigan	Karla Kuskin
Gwendolyn Brooks	Nancy Larrick
John Ciardi	Edward Lear
William Cole	Myra Cohn Livingston
James Dickey	William Matthews
Paul Laurence Dunbar	David McCord
Stephen Dunning	Rod McKuen
Aileen Fisher	Eve Merriam
Robert Francis	Lilian Moore
Robert Frost	Richard Peck
Nikki Giovanni	E. A. Robinson
Mel Glenn	Cynthia Rylant
Donald Hall	Carl Sandburg
Lee Bennett Hopkins	Shel Silverstein
A. E. Housman	William Stafford
Langston Hughes	Robert Penn Warren

Some Anthologies to Check Out

Dunning, Stephen, *et al. Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle and Other Modern Verse.* Scott-Foresman, 1966.

Dunning, Stephen, *et al. Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needle and Other Complete Modern Poems.* Lothrop, Lee & Shephard, 1969.

Glenn, Mel. *Class Dismissed! High School Poems.* Clarion Books, 1982.

Janeczko, Paul B. (Ed.). *Don't Forget to Fly: A Cycle of Modern Poets.* Bradbury, 1981.

Janeczko, Paul B. (Ed.). *Poetspeak: In Their Work, About Their Work.* Bradbury, 1983.

Janeczko, Paul B. (Ed.) *Strings: A Gathering of Family Poems.* Bradbury, 1984.

Koch, Kenneth with Kate Farrell. *Talking to the Sun: An Illustrated Anthology of Poems for Young People.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985.

Larrick, Nancy (Ed.). *Bring Me All Your Dreams.* M. Evans, 1980.

Merriam, Eve. *If Only I Could Tell You: Poems for Young Lovers and Dreamers.* Knopf, 1983.

Morse, David (Ed.). *Grandfather Rock.* Dell, 1973.

Peck, Richard. *Pictures That Storm Inside My Head: Poems for the Inner You.* Avon, 1976.

Peck, Richard. *Sounds and Silences.* Dell, 1970.

Plotz, Helen (Ed.). *Gladly Learn and Gladly Teach: Poems of the School Experience.* Greenwillow, 1981.

Plotz, Helen (Ed.). *Saturday's Children: Poems of Work.* Greenwillow, 1981.

Silverstein, Shel. *A Light In the Attic.* Harper & Row, 1981.

Silverstein, Shel. *Where the Sidewalk Ends.* Harper & Row, 1983.

Smith, William Jay. *A Green Place: Modern Poems.* Merloyd Lawrence, 1982.

Williams, Emmett. *An Anthology of Concrete Poetry.* Something Else Press, 1967.

In his commentary on how hesitant many are to teach poetry, True (1980) emphasizes the importance of reading poetry aloud in the classroom. "I have come to think, in fact, that time spent reading a poem aloud is much more important than 'analyzing' it, if there isn't time for both" (p. 43). In my literature courses, I like to begin each class with poetry sharing. I share poems I enjoy, and I invite my students to do the same--voluntarily, of course. This sharing involves no explanation or discussion; its purpose is first and foremost enjoyment. It also reinforces Dunning's (1966) principle that the poetry unit should give way to the occasional sharing of poems.

Classroom sharing either of poems others have written or of those students have written operates best when we invoke Purves's (1972) objectives of a response-centered program, which remind us that as individuals we can come to trust our own responses and get to know ourselves in the process while recognizing that as individuals we share both differences from and similarities with other people. Within these ground rules we can learn to be comfortable with ourselves and supportive of others.

Mainprize (1982) offers an immersion approach for teachers who aren't comfortable with the obligatory poetry unit. His approach includes using lots of poetry posters and pictures of poets on classroom walls, having students bring in favorite tapes or records for listening to and discussing lyrics and launching the unit with humorous poems. He urges that poetry writing be included and cautions teachers who might expect great poetry of their students to keep in mind their age and intellectual levels.

Rodriquez (1985) stresses the importance of images in student poetry writing: "Use images that provoke thought, feeling, memory, or association with other images" (p. 36). He reminds us that nouns and verbs create the best images, and he recommends freewriting and journal entries as sources of ideas and images for emerging poems.

Jones (1985) describes how his school system developed an effective program that included reading and writing poetry. "It took us about a year of experimenting with process approaches to writing, the keeping of journals, and the assignment of word games and model poems before we got ourselves on track" (p. 63). They brought in a poet who worked with English teachers in workshops to help them learn aspects of the poetry writing process. They discovered that basic to all the techniques they learned "was the premise that poetry begins with experience, that writing poetry begins with thinking not about metaphors or tone but about our lives and, later, about the way our lives may be rediscovered and reconstructed in words" (p. 64).

Involving poets in the classroom has gained acceptance through the "Poets in School" program that places experienced poets in schools to conduct writing classes for students and workshops for teachers. Taylor (1980) reviews some of the reports of this national program and offers information on such materials as the *Directory of American Poets* which contains state-by-state lists of poets as well as addresses of state arts councils and other helpful information.

Poetry writing for beginners can take many forms as Koch (1970), Ebsensen (1975), Kirby and Liner (1981) and others have demonstrated so well. I have had some pleasant surprises using the magazine poem approach of Fox (1978), especially among students with little or no prior interest in poetry. Needed are stacks of old magazines, from which students may cut words and phrases to develop an image or idea. As they compose they give thought to the form their poem will take, which they then mount on butcher paper for display. The excitement of creation is contagious, and students enjoy reading their poems aloud. They may elect to add visual reinforcement to their poems with pictures from the magazines. (For more ideas on teaching and writing poetry see Table 2.)

Table 2 On Teaching and Writing Poetry:

Duke, Charles and Sally Jacobsen. *Reading and Writing Poetry: Successful Approaches for the Students and Teacher.* The Oryx Press, 1983.

Dunning, Stephen. *Teaching Literature to Adolescents: Poetry.* Scott, Foresman, 1966.

Ebensen, Barbara. *A Celebration of Bees: Helping Children Write Poetry.* Winston Press, 1975.

Kirby, Dan and Tom Liner. *Inside Out.* Boynton/Cook, 1981.

Koch, Kenneth. *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children.* Random House, 1973.

Koch, Kenneth. *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry.* Harper & Row, 1970.

Koch, Kenneth with Kate Farrell. *I Never Told Anybody: Teaching Poetry Writing in a Nursing Home.* Random House, 1977.

Koch, Kenneth and Kate Farrell. *Sleeping on the Wing: An Anthology of Modern Poetry with Essays on Reading and Writing.* Random House, 1981.

Larrick, Nancy (Ed.). *Somebody Turned on a Tap in These Kids: Poetry and Young People Today.* Delacorte, 1971.

Powell, Brian. *English Through Poetry Writing.* Peacock , 1968.

That student written poetry has drawn criticism is not surprising. Lopate's (1977) contention that Koch's young poetry writers "parrot the mannerisms of contemporary writing. . . without their really *consciously* understanding what they are doing" (p. 106) is not without merit. We must recognize, as Edward Barrett does, that the students whose work became *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* were in fact underprivileged children on the Lower East Side of New York, none of whom were taking advanced classes; and that while some poems are "precious" or "too hip" or "too breezy," the collection "is primarily an experiment in opening up a child's imagination to a different kind of world" (p. 101).

In a more recent defense of Koch's work, DiYanni (1984) argues that "Koch's poetry ideas can be used most successfully as ways of getting started, as ways to break down the barriers of fear and insecurity which block students' access to the pleasures of poetry" (p. 39). While DiYanni also admits to some limitations of the program, he does view it as a good start: "and if the poems of Koch influenced poets. . . lack formal tightness, if they rarely sustain the vision which animates them, and if, finally, such poems do not. . . probe deeply in thought or range widely in feeling, they do nonetheless reveal something of poetry's surprise and joy and astonishment" (p. 39).

We must be prepared to generate opportunities for students to experience that surprise, joy and astonishment through interactions with a wide variety of texts and through the creation of new texts. What better way to do so than to create in our classrooms the kind of discovery environment Jim Wayne Miller describes in his "Poetry Workshop."

Poetry Workshop
Jim Wayne Miller

Try to think of your first draft as a creek
in flood time, roaring out of banks.
There's been a nightstorm on your mind's headwaters
so the poem comes trash-filled, tumbling,
full of chicken coops, barbed wire,
tin shed roofs scraping down over rocks.
It's tearing along through trees on either bank,
dropping fertilizer sacks and two-by-fours in branches.
It's swirling and standing out in bottomland.

Now you work with it until it drops
every tin can and bottle and runs clear
again between its banks. Of course, you'll want
to leave a few surprises, so the reader,
out in your poem like a troutfisherman in waders,
rounds a bend and comes on a piano
lodged high in the forks of a sycamore.

Poem reprinted from *Vein of Words*, Seven Buffaloes Press, Big Timber, MT, 1984, with permission of the poet.

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WRITING FROM LOCAL HISTORY: TRY HISTORICAL POETRY

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While brainstorming possible directions to take, a recent graduate creative writing class I taught in the Texas hill country decided to focus on writing from local history. As we reviewed the experience afterwards, it occurred to us that what we had done could be shaped into an historical literature unit, or curriculum stream, for young adults, junior or senior high. It strikes me now that sharing the experience that provoked the unit idea would be more useful to most teachers than laying out a ready-made unit, likely to be reworked anyway before it could be used with particular students. I suppose the difference is analogous to providing the moist clay versus a shaped pot only in need of finishing and paint.

I discovered years ago that Norton and Gretton's *Writing Incredibly Short Plays, Poems, Stories* (1972) can be an excellent resource guide for short writings. In that it has proved to be appropriate for high school students on up (and with some adaptation, selected junior high students as well), we used it as a point of departure for study and writing practice in forms of interest. Given that we had a little less than three weeks (albeit 24 hours per day and weekends, if needed) to do the research and the writing, we focused on these sources: the local historical society (Junction, Texas), the courthouse, long-established families, cemeteries, the library, the museum, the oldest buildings in the area.

The historical society proved to be the prime source. The average age of their members must have been 85, so they could authenticate much of the material we uncovered and could provide the interesting nuance, the human quality missing from straight historical pieces. They were also of the oldest families, knew the cemeteries best and had access to the oldest buildings. They provided us a history of the county published in 1935, a tour of the museum, personal commentary on each artifact contained therein and volunteered as guides for automobile tours of the historical markers and landmarks. As they (or their immediate ancestors) were there when the history behind the markers was happening, their talk significantly enriched the experience.

On all of this we took copious notes and began writing fragments of pieces we hoped to finish, or at least rough out, before the class broke up. We discovered during review sessions that personal responses were shaping themselves into fiction and nonfiction narratives, descriptive and narrative sketches, essays (written and photographic), drama and poetry. We were pleased, but concluded that we had been on an extended brainstorming trip and that it was time to focus. We set forth, then, these activities to provide a deeper look:

(1) A TALK BY A MEMBER OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, WITH A CLASS INTERVIEW FOLLOWING. Our hidden agenda was to write a character sketch. We brainstormed possibilities before and following the interview and agreed to each produce a sketch the next day for peer critique. Some cheated a bit and came up with poetic sketches. The idea became contagious and we all experimented with a poetic character sketch (E. A. Robinson's "Minever Cheevy" and other works come to mind as rough models). Poetry became so intriguing that we decided that the major emphasis for the rest of the course should be exploring, experimenting with, poetry.

(2) A TRIP TO THE JUNCTION CEMETERY. We had become fascinated with the circumstances surrounding a particular event in the history of Kimble County, the last man killed by Indians in that locale (1876), partly, I think, because I had been working on a long poem on the subject and had asked for student reactions to it.

One way to engage students in writing, apparently, is to involve them in the teacher's writing processes, particularly as they relate to a work in progress. After all, we ask them to put their works on the line; we should at least return the favor. Doing this early in the course seemed to make everyone open to oral reading of their own works and to accepting responses from peers. As I presented to them real problems I was having with a work I cared about, they seriously attempted to probe the work and make meaningful suggestions. By their own reckoning, they learned more about literature and writing during these experiences than in any other way they could recall, and they were able to apply what they learned to responding to literature they subsequently read and to writing their own literature.

At the cemetery we observed, with some direction from the historical society, the graves of Isaac Kountz, the second last man killed, and his family. His homesite (long since washed away by a flood) was just below the cemetery along the Llano River, and a historical marker was placed at the location of his murder. We could stand at that spot and recreate the event based on detailed accounts of it. We also were able to study the blood-stained pants Isaac wore that day, preserved under glass in the Junction Museum. Later, I was able to read handwritten, eyewitness accounts, sometimes conflicting, of the Kountz killing and speak with one of his family descendants. Interestingly, the Kountz family was and is prominent in the Kimble County area, accounting, perhaps, for the preservation of details and artifacts related to the tragedy of Isaac Kountz.

On the other hand, we discovered that the location of the grave of the last man killed, Sam Speer, is unknown, although it is thought that he was buried in the first Junction cemetery, which became pastureland before a portion of it was reclaimed by the historical society. Remains were moved or not, depending on the availability and motivation of survivors. We found no tombstone there for Sam Speer, but rather an unfortunate collection of broken and fallen headstones strewn about, nearly hidden by dirt and tumbleweed. Most early courthouse records were burned in fires, but the best remaining evidence, recurring newspaper accounts of the event, suggests that the Speers left the area soon after Sam's murder. The historical poem that follows my recoun-

ting of the course experience is true to the facts of the killings as I know them and rendered, in the tradition of historical fiction, as I interpret and extend those facts.

(3) A VISIT TO THE RUINS OF THE JOHN KOUNTZ HOME. Following the flood of 1892 or so, John, older brother of Isaac, rebuilt the family home on higher ground. After a time, the property was sold and the home abandoned. Illegal aliens from Mexico, we were told, now occasionally use the weathered remains as a kind of "safe house." Knowing what we did of the family, and knowing that some of the wood used to construct it came from the original family home, made this at once a thoughtful and exciting experience. Much of the creative response was introspective, interacting the physical reality of the structure and the mortality we all face. From family records we discovered that John had moved the remains of Isaac from the first Junction cemetery to their present site when the old cemetery land was sold for pastureland. We also learned that Dr. E. K. Kountz, himself an adventurer, had named his children accordingly: Christopher Columbus Kountz, Isaac Newton Kountz, John Cook Kountz, etc. Such information led the group to speculate on the personalities and relationships within the Kountz family. The course ended before that element of response could be explored in writing, although I continued the research on subsequent trips to Junction, which has allowed me to polish the poem and begin to shape what I have learned into an historical novel based on the Kountz family of 1876.

Approaching historical literature from creative writing perspectives allowed us to walk in the shoes of the people who made the history, as well as the people who make literature of history. History and literature came to life because we engaged it as something ongoing, as something to discover. History is not limited to kings or wars; historical writing is not limited to fiction or nonfiction narrative. Historical poetry is a viable response to history; poetry is learned, history comes to life. Based on our shared reactions, I am convinced that whatever reading of

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The Last Man Killed By Indians In Kimble County, Texas

Sam Speer, watching the black ball of a rider
growing larger against the soft morning snow,
turned away long enough to fix the positions
of weapons still in the cabin and move toward
the muzzle loader propped in the far corner
to his right, his mother stopping the rhythm
of the Christmas dough and looking to him.

"Can't make him out yet. Too much snow.
Coming like trouble though. Like Indians. Has
to be. Too long overdue. Knew it last night
in the moonlight. Too full. Just right
for a raiding party. Sits his horse like
Tom Doran. Yeah. Better get out to meet him."

He slipped outside as the rider, crusted
in white, began shouting even before
he had pulled the big bay up.

"Isaac Kountz's been murdered by Indians.
Shot dead from ear to ear through the head.
Nine bucks, renegades, Comanche maybe,
in white man's clothes, Sebastian said.
He was caught with Isaac in the pasture
moving sheep, unarmed, on foot. Outran them,
Isaac couldn't. They're after horses again
and just killing. E. K. is getting a posse up.
Better get your people and animals in."

The runner jerked the bay around, headed
north. But by then Sam was grabbing his gear
and trading the long barrel for brother Tom's
.50 calibre sharp-shooting needle gun,
and his mother was already putting on
her husband's coat and hat, thinking about
Tom, thinking about loading the guns
and setting them up by the shoot holes
for when the men returned, or they didn't.
Sam mounted the yellow mare and headed her
for the flats to find Tom, out there alone,
unarmed, unaware, driving in the horses
to beat the Texas Norther coming on.

He got to Tom in time to hand him his gun
and get the horses running for the corral.
Then the Indians struck, screaming and
shooting, splitting the brothers between
them. Sam spurred the mare and two took
after him, the rest chasing the horses north,
ignoring Tom, frozen in the swirling
Christmas snow, needle gun pointed to heaven,
never firing a shot, a spectator sketched
against the graying sky, watching the two
closing in on the seventeenth year
of Sam Speer, shooting him down, dead,
on their way to join the others, rushing
the forty head toward the hills, too far,
too fast, too trailwise for the Rangers
and ranchers who ran their horses out
before they could issue the only justice
around
and shoot the savages down.

And so the history goes, more or less,
of Sam Speer and his brother Tom, the last
man killed by Indians in Kimble County,
Texas, on a snowy Christmas Eve morning,
1876, and the last witness as well.

They say Tom Speer lost his nerve and Indians
don't take scalps of black-haired boys. It
could be, though, that settler and Indian
did have one thing in common. For as Tom
held his hammer down so did two of their kind
when they had poor Sebastian on the ground
point blank, eleven years old, and wide eyed.
What reasons were forever blown away by the
cold wind that day. Maybe there comes a
moment, single frozen moment, when men have
enough of enemies, on softly snowing days.

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LIBRARY CONNECTIONS

Edited by Donald J. Kenney
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At library and English conferences people flock to sessions where authors are the speakers and to exhibit halls to stand in long lines to get an autograph of Judy Blume, Richard Peck or Norma Fox Mazer. Students (and yes, even English teachers and librarians) are enthralled with the authors of young adult books. We read their books and are puzzled why a character did or did not do something or behaved in an expected manner. We may not like the ending and want to know why the author "ended the book that way."

One way to motivate students to read is to give them the opportunity to meet some of their favorite authors. This issue's article deals with an exciting program that brings authors into the school to meet and talk with the students. The article offers practical suggestions to fund such a program and to plan the visits. Programs like this can help English teachers and librarians promote reading and bring about a spirit of cooperation in the school and the community.

FROM PRINT TO PERSON, OR HOW TO GET AN AUTHOR FOR YOUR SCHOOL

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The idea of introducing authors to my students began when I enrolled in a Young Adult Literature class at Louisiana State University. Richard Peck was a visiting author-professor of that class who proved to be an excellent teacher as well as an exceptionally talented author. His insights into the hearts and minds of teenagers convinced me that students must meet this author.

In the fall I returned to school brimming with enthusiasm and presented my idea to our local school board, only to have it immediately squelched. Great idea, I was told, but there's no money in the budget. A year later, when I returned from sabbatical leave, an opportunity for my project resurfaced. I was reassigned to a high school where a very progressive principal was looking for new ways to encourage reading and stimulate interest in the library program. I presented him my idea of a visiting author program, but again lack of funding presented a major problem. At his suggestion my co-librarian and I approached the Parent-Teacher Club (PTC) for funding.

Before approaching this group we put together a packet justifying our proposal. We contacted Richard Peck's publicist for the necessary information on how to begin. The promotional packet prepared for the PTC included a statement of what we wanted to do, and why we had chosen Peck. We included reviews of his books which had won awards, a select group of articles by and about him emphasizing his interest in promoting reading and illustrating his broad knowledge of adolescents and an estimated budget.

After much discussion and negotiation, an agreement was reached with the PTC to support the project. They agreed to raise the money through a combination of contributions solicited by a PTC member and money from proceeds of PTC projects.

Negotiations with Richard Peck took about two months. We received a copy of his "Care and Feeding of the Visiting Author" (1982) which became our Bible – we didn't want to be included in the revision as one of the "how not to's." Letters and phone calls flew back and forth between our library and the PTC, and between our library and New York. The final schedule was worked out. Since Peck prefers small groups, we scheduled three such groups to come to the library during the morning. At noon a PTC member cooked a typical "Cajun" luncheon, followed by an autograph party in the afternoon to which various school board members and the school board administration were invited to meet the author. At the autograph party he autographed books that we purchased and sold to the students prior to the visit. Immediately following the autograph party, a press conference was scheduled for the local TV and newspapers. That night, we held a reception at a PTC member's home for faculty, school board members, administrators and interested people from our local university and community.

We prepared our students and faculty for Richard Peck's visit by requiring that every student who attended one of the sessions be familiar with one or more of his books. Many students read them all. To satisfy the demand, additional paperbacks were purchased. Students eagerly checked the

books out. During the sessions with Peck, the students asked questions and interacted with him. We also scheduled classes to make up a total of fifty students for each session - the number suggested by Peck's publicist. We made a point of utilizing classes we thought would benefit most, such as creative writing.

To prepare for Richard Peck's visit we wanted as much faculty and student involvement as possible, and everyone pitched in enthusiastically. An art teacher had students create posters depicting books Peck has written; the speech teacher had her students prepare dramatizations of book excerpts which they performed for various classes. Other teachers and clubs helped us by publishing articles in the school newspaper, preparing a large bulletin board in the hallway and putting up a large "WELCOME RICHARD PECK" marquee outside the school which could be seen by every passing motorist. We were even asked "What office is this Richard Peck running for?"

The library PTC mother took over the sale of books for the autograph party. We sold over 300 books and could have sold even more paperbacks. Many of our PTC members wanted books for their younger children at home.

The morning of our author's visit dawned and everything went as scheduled. Arrangements for Peck's room had been made at a local hotel in a location where he could be picked up easily, without becoming embroiled in early morning traffic. School begins at 7:45 a.m. The student sessions were very popular; students left complaining that they had had many more questions to ask. The autograph session was crowded by eager students, and Peck graciously autographed every book. Our evening reception was a crowded affair where the mayor presented a certificate making Peck an "Honorary Cajun."

The next morning we drove Peck to the airport at 6:30 a.m. and put him on a plane for Hawaii and still another "author visit." He was exhausted and so were we, but we all had a heady feeling of having sponsored an event the students would long remember.

Was the endeavor worth it? Yes many times over! The students now see our library as a place where things happen. They have been introduced to books and encouraged to read. They have seen an author as a human being whose glamorous life still involves study, work and discipline. He made the message clear: the rewards are great, but if you don't write, you don't eat. Richard Peck's books are rarely on the shelf. They continue to be among the most requested, and students still have fond memories of his visit. His books also continue to be the most often stolen -- a high compliment for any author. The parents were so gratified with the success, they agreed to fund a Visiting Author Program. Parents often call to ask who the next author will be.

We have just completed the fourth year of our Visiting Author Program. Our ultimate goal was to provide a wide variety of authors to encourage students to read as well as to meet the authors of their favorite books. We feel this has been realized. In keeping with this goal, the author for our second year was Ernest Gaines, who emphasized the black experience in literature. The third year the Folktellers, Connie Regan and Barbara Freeman, captivated the students with the myths and legends of our country. The fourth year Norma Fox Mazer and Harry Mazer enthusiastically shared with the students their prolific careers as writers and the experiences that contributed to the writing of their books.

In reviewing our experiences with the Visiting Author Program, one of the most important things we learned was never let money stand in your way; there are many avenues open for funding. If you have tried the school board and your own school, seek out private businesses and individuals in your community. Fund raising by the library for a school-wide program can prove fruitful. The school clubs often have funds available and are eager to share in a school-wide program. The library can also raise money with the sale of the visiting author's books -- particularly paperbacks that most students can afford.

The library where I work is extremely lucky in that we have two full-time librarians, allowing us time to plan the visits. Careful, detailed planning is necessary to make the visit a success. Here are some organizing tips that may be helpful in planning a program for a visiting author:

(1) Be organized. Make sure your arrangements are perfectly clear to your author. Don't "spring" anything on the author that has not been agreed to in advance. After the author's arrival, review the schedule.

(2) Have a reliable person pick the author up at the airport and drive him/her to the hotel. See that meals are provided. Check with the author about dinner plans. Some people prefer a little time alone or would simply like to recover from jet lag.

(3) Allow ample time to get the author to the school for the first session with your students.

(4) A small welcoming committee at the school is a good idea. However, make sure people have read at least one of the author's books.

(5) Involve parents and faculty. We were not turned down one time. Follow-up on assignments that you have made; in the press of hectic lives, deadlines may be forgotton.

(6) Publicize, publicize and publicize the event to your students and faculty. Blanket the hallways with posters, bulletin boards and signs. Announce it over the PA -- "countdown - only four more days until the visit of _____."

(7) Let the media know about this event. They can tell the public about the positive things being accomplished in your school.

(8) Don't plan your author visit the same day your football team plays their arch rival. Check the school calendar for a suitable time and then make this the most important event of the year.

(9) Pass out annotations of his/her works and give booktalks in the library and classrooms.

Above all, go ahead and make the arrangements for an author visit. Everyone will profit -- you, your students, faculty and parents. Our faculty-student-parent cooperation and involvement has maintained its high level. This type of program does involve time and planning, but it produces positive results.

ROMANTIC FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS: 1980s STYLE (TWO ARTICLES)

Love and Lust in the Secondary Schools: Do Formula Romances Have a Place in the Schools?

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Alice Kuhn
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> His locker was just a few doors down from hers, and she never missed an opportunity to run her fingers over the metal door after he had closed it, hoping to catch a bit of warmth left over from his hands. (Beckman, *Please Let Me In*, p. 7)

Although formula novels for young readers have been available for many years in such series as *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew*, recently they have taken a new direction: teenagers' interest in love and romance has been joined with publishers' concern with profits. This merger has resulted in the proliferation of formula paperback teenage romance novels, marketed under intriguingly-titled series such as *Wildfire*, *Sweet Dreams* and *Windswept*.

These books are junior versions of the extremely popular adult paperback romance series sold at supermarket checkout counters. Some, in fact, are spinoffs of the adult books; for example, the adult *Silhouette* romance series published by Simon & Schuster is the parent for *First Love from Silhouette* (Wigutoff, 1981, p. 15). Their success both in terms of popularity and profitability, is reflected in the sale of approximately two million *Wildfire* (Scholastic) in only one year (Harvey, 1981, p. 8).

Teenage Romance Novels: The Controversy

The popularity of these novels has created a great deal of controversy. On the other hand there are those who believe that the books deal with matters of interest to young people without threat (for example, love without the responsibilities of sexual involvement), and teenagers will enjoy reading them. Both teachers and librarians have argued these high interest/low reading level romances might lure reluctant readers into developing a positive reading habit. The notion is that these former non-readers can then be directed to better literature (Parrish, 1983, pp. 611-612).

On the other hand, some teachers and librarians express grave concern about the library quality of the books. Further, some of the books' critics are dismayed by the novels' stereotypic portrayals of girls and boys. These critics maintain that the books return women and men to their expected roles prior to the women's movement. The values promoted in the books are the importance of good looks, clothes, popularity and the attainment of "the ultimate success for the female—the love of a good man." The message is that a woman is incomplete without a man (*Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 1981, p. 3).

In addition to reservations about their inherent value, the books are being sold through the Scholastic Book Club and Xerox Education Corporation's book club. Opponents of the books fear that using the schools as a sales vehicle will imply approval of the books by the schools and educators (*Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, pp. 30-31).

The Need for Research

Based on the popularity and profitability of teenage formula romance novels, it appears they are not a passing fad. Educators need to confront the issues involved and determine how to respond to students, parents and other educators who experience ambivalence about the value of these books.

Much has been written about the role and responsibilites of teachers and librarians in guiding young people toward mature reading tastes. According to Pilgrim and McAllister, "Those concerned with reading guidance are too often content with helping young people develop reading skills and introducing them to books they may enjoy. Another obligation in guiding young people and their reading is to see to it that they make steady progress toward reading maturity. Stimulating and developing this maturity is the essence, the heart, the purpose of reading guidance" (1968, p. 4).

Educators, because they have this important responsibility, must know the books they recommend. However, though researchers have looked at the content of teenage romances (Christian, 1984) and the reason for their appeal (McWhorter, 1984; Cawelti, 1976), few have looked at the literary quality of the books based on set criteria. What is lacking is literary analysis. This study can help educators reach more informed decisions about teenage formula romance novels. Two major questions were addressed: (1) Do romance novels, sponsored by in-school book clubs, satisfy literary criteria acceptable to educators? (2) Should they be recommended by teachers and librarians?

To answer these questions a list of criteria for excellence in adolescent literature was compiled from the work of experts in the field (Carlson, 1971; Cline and McBride, 1983; Donelson and Nilsen, 1980; Gray and Rogers, 1956; Meade and Small, 1973; Pickering and Hoeper, 1981; Scott, 1962). The books were analyzed based on the criteria, some of which applied to all literature, others applied only to adolescent literature.

The Tradebooks Analyzed

Five romance series, sold by in-school book clubs, were chosen for the analysis: *First Love from Silhouette*, *Wildfire*, *Sweet Dreams*, *Wishing Star* and *Windswept*. Two novels from each series were carefully analyzed against each criterion. To illustrate the analysis, each criterion will be listed with appropriate examples from the books.

(1) *The book is unique.*

The teenage romance novels cannot possibly satisfactorily meet this criterion, since a formula automatically precludes uniqueness. The publishers of these books even go so far as to provide "tip-sheets" for aspiring authors which offer guidelines for writing the

books. This guarantees that the books will not be unique. For example, the tipsheet for Bantam's *Sweet Dreams* includes such suggestions as:

> Each *Sweet Dreams* romance features a heroine who is about sixteen years old--an ordinary, middle-class suburban girl, with a family to match. The romantic interest, a boy of the same age or a little older, should appear early in the story. . . The plot is moved by. . . conflicts embracing adolescent life. . . Lastly, there should be no profanity, no religious references, and no explicit sex. We endorse hugging and kissing, of course. Where would romance be without them?

Within each series there may be some degree of uniqueness from other romance series; for example, *Windswept* books are all gothic romances, while *Wishing Star* books deal with some sort of handicap or tragedy.

(2) *The plot is credible, well-constructed and logical.*

Predictability and coincidence are the hallmarks of teenage romance novels. The publishers make no pretense that anything else is the case. In fact, in the *First Love* books, the editor writes a "Dear Reader" letter, describing this line of contemporary romances, stating that they contain many of the elements of the adult Silhouettes--"love stories, *happy endings*. . . young heroines and heroes in contemporary and *recognizable* situations." (Emphasis added.)

The plots of the books primarily revolve around the desire for popularity, especially with the opposite sex, the search for this popularity and the acquisition of same. Since the books always have a happy ending, the heroine *always* ends up with the appropriate person to fill her needs. If she had been attempting to arrange a relationship with a certain young man and it turned out in the course of the book that he "wasn't a good person," then by the end of the book, she has found "the good guy."

For instance, in Sweet Dreams' The Popularity Plan, Frannie, who is so shy she can barely say "hello" to a boy, becomes the most popular girl in school through the machinations of her best friends. Frannie discovers that popularity isn't all that she thought it would be, especially when it keeps her from Ronnie, the boy she really likes. True to the formula, Frannie pairs with Ronnie.

Further, the plots not only are predetermined and constructed with the obvious purpose of imparting a message, but also coincidence is an important ingredient. For example, in *Dreams and Memories* (Windswept) the heroine's stepmother gets a job selling condominiums at the place where the heroine's paternal family mystery occured. She never knew of the mystery: taking the job was a coincidence that involved moving to another state. As a matter of act, in all the novels analyzed, the heroine is in the "right place at the right time," allowing her to catch the man of her dreams.

(3) *The author skillfully uses figurative language and mature narrative techniques.*

"Figurative language" in the books consists primarily of cliche' and metaphor. For example: ". . . A lump rose into my throat and the hollow ache inside me made my ribs feel taut. . . " (*I'm Christy*, Wildfire, p.8). ". . . I felt as light as whipped cream" (*How Do You Say Goodbye?*, Sweet Dreams, p. 24). "Disappointment lay like a weight on my chest" (*Jody*, Wishing Star, p. 11). "Maybe her dream was coming true at last" (*Please Let Me In*, First Love, p. 53). "My bedroom was in a wing of the house that provided an excellent view of the jagged cliffs. They seemed to mock me by their very presence, and I drew the little white chintz curtains over the window and shivered" (*Don't Walk Alone*, Windswept, p. 17).

(4) *The story has broad appeal.*

Since the plots are primarily concerned with girl's attempts to become popular, mostly with boys, it is unlikely that male readers will be drawn to these books. Other concerns in the books include: cosmetics, clothing and interior design of girl's bedrooms. None of which are likely to appeal to male readers.

(5) *Characters are developed in a variety of ways, are multidimensional, not stereotypic and are believable.*

Characters are developed through first or third person narrative. There is little variety in how characters are developed. However, all the books contain an element of "gossip;" that is, one female character talking about another in an unkind way. The gossip assists the reader in learning about the characters. "Miranda is a real sore loser. . . we're all on your side, Amy. Miranda Herman is a spoiled, spiteful little witch. . . " (*Don't Walk Alone*, p. 82). Primary emphasis is placed on physical attributes, Mike is described as "tall, sunburned, black curly hair, the bluest eyes, she's ever seen, strong hands, 19-20 years old. . . he looks like a Greek god, and is a hard worker." Marshall, the eventual "Mr. Right," is described as "tall, lanky and blonde," as compared to Greg, who has "black hair, dark brown eyes, shoulders like a steam roller." Marshall is kind, sensitive, hardworking, understanding and always available to talk. Greg, on the other hand, is insensitive, self-indulgent and conceited.

Similarly, physical descriptions of heroines fit into the pattern. In Sweet Dreams' *The Popularity Plan*, Frannie is described as "shy, with sunshine blonde hair, cut fashionably. . . average height, pale blue eyes, large and round, and a nose that turns gently upward."

(6) *The theme helps structure the literature, but does not overpower it.*

Often, the message appears to be the sole reason the book has been written. For example, *Please Let Me In* contains several messages: (1) Anything a female does should be geared toward one ultimate goal--to attract a male. (2) People come in extremes of good and evil. The book points out that Melissa is fortunate to have realized in time that Marshall is good while Greg is unsavory.

(7) *The book enables the reader to broaden her/his world view.*

Romance novels are written in predictable fashion; all loose ends are tied up by the last page. Topics include popularity, clothing, cosmetics, interior decoration and physical appearance. Few insights are gained by readers of formula romance.

(8) *The ending coincides with reality.*

Teenage romance novels always have happy endings. All problems are resolved through pleasant and satisfying means. The heroine always ends up with her man. However, if the man she sought is wrong for her, she finds "Mr. Right."

(9) *The book portrays human emotions in a warm, sensitive manner, avoiding excessive sentimentality.*

Sentimentality is the underpinning of these books. While overt sex is not acceptable, romance definitely is. "The doubts, the thoughts, everything evaporated except the enchanting feel of his mouth on mine. A throb which began on my lips flowed all the way through me and the second kiss was even more wonderful and the ones after that, if such a thing was possible. . . " (*I'm Christy*, p. 162).

Overall, the books analyzed in this study did not satisfy generally accepted standards of literary quality as applied to all literature. However, several of the criteria gleaned from the experts apply *exclusively* to adolescent literature. Not surprisingly, the books met these criteria more successfully.

(10) *The book rapidly engages the reader's attention, within the first few pages.*

All the novels analyzed did indeed capture reader's attention rapidly. For example in *Please Let Me In*, the very first sentence states: "Melissa Johnson stood in the hallway of Taylor High School with her back to Greg Scott, their bodies so close she could almost feel the warmth of his skin" (p. 7).

(11) *Language is natural and flowing, similar to the way young adults actually speak.*

The dialogue is not unlike ordinary conversations teenagers have with their friends; though not all adolescents are obsessed with dating, clothing, cosmetics, food and gossip.

(12) *The book avoids lengthy descriptions.*

Overall, the books do contain a great deal of description focusing on: physical attributes, clothing, cosmetics, hairdos, girl's bedroom decor and food. Most of the books contain a description of the teen "hang-out," such as the local pizza or ice cream parlor. Descriptive passages in the books are not used to expand knowledge of unique characteristics, setting, plot or mood; rather they substantiate the uniformity of these aspects of the books.

(13) *The book avoids interwoven, multiple complex plots.*

The plots in these books are simple, easy to follow, not very believable, but with an engaging beginning, a fast moving middle and a happy ending.

(14) *The book gives realistic hope that problems associated with adolescence can be solved.*

The books offer simple solutions to various problems troubling many young people: how to achieve popularity, how to overcome the ordinariness of one's life, how to cope with moving to a strange city, feelings of shyness and being left out, inadequacy and insecurity. The prescription offered to life's problems is frequently having a man in your life. Rather than offering "realistic" hope, they portray a simplistic picture of life.

For example, the books discuss romance and love without any of the responsibilites of sexual involvement. There is a great deal of hugging and kissing (acceptable, and even required by the guidelines), but no explicit sexual involvement. In fact, girls who participate in anything more than hugging and kissing are considered to be "that kind of girl."

Implications of the Analysis

The books rank very low in overall literary quality, as defined by the criteria. They do not favorably satisfy *any* of the criteria used to define overall good literature. On the other hand, their rating on criteria relating exclusively to adolescent literature is quite high. They satisfy most of the criteria to a greater or lesser degree, and appear to be books that teenagers would find interesting and easy reading.

This finding indicates that teenage romance novels are poor *literary* choices for young people, even though teenagers might find them interesting. While a high rating on adolescent literary criteria is centainly one very important consideration in choosing literature for young people, a high rating on this dimension alone is not sufficient to promote reading maturity and satisfy English teachers' and librarians' concerns with literary quality. There is not an either-or choice between overall literary quality and high adolescent literary quality. Rather, a high rating on both dimensions is necessary, if young people are to achieve reading growth and maturity.

As Carlsen states in *Books and the Teen-age Reader*, those books that would be best suited for teenagers between the ages of 12 and 15 are adolescent novels written by serious writers for a teenage audience.

> The writer tries to evoke through his use of words the feelings and emotions, the triumphs and failures, the tensions and releases, that people in the age group of 12-20 normally experience. . . . Like good adult literature, the adolescent novel holds up for the reader's inspection the whole spectrum of human life. . . And as in real life there is no neat patterned solution to life's problems. (p.41)

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Romance Books Analyzed

Wishing Star, Scholastic Book Services:
Kent, Deborah. *Jody,* 1983.
Johnson, Audrey P. *Don't Look Back,* 1981.

Windswept, Scholastic Book Services:
Harris, Lavinia . *Dreams and Memories,* 1982.
Bringle, Mary. *Don't Walk Alone,* 1981.

Wildfire, Scholastic Book Services:
Reit, Ann. *Yours Truly, Love, Janie,* 1981.
Johnson, Maud. *I'm Christy,* 1979.

Sweet Dreams, Bantam Books:
Verson, Rosemary. *The Popularity Plan,* 1981.
Burman, Margaret. *How Do You Say Goodbye,* 1982.

First Love, Silhouette:
Beckman, Patti. *Please Let Me In,* 1981.
Harper, Elaine. *Love At First Sight,* 1981.

Double Date to Double Love: Female Sex Roles in Teen Romances, 1942-1985

Joyce Litton
Athens, Ohio

I had assumed that with the increase in the number of women who work outside the home and with the impact of the women's movement that I would find a decrease in the use of stereotypes of women and girls in the books for young adults. I decided to see if one of the staples of my adolescence in the late 50s and early 60s, the innocent teen romance, had become less stereotyped in the 80s. Contrary to what Berta Parrish and Karen Atwood argue (1986), I found that recent books in this particular category are at least as stereotyped as older books of this type.

The innocent teen romance has appealed to pre-teen and adolescent girls since the development of the junior novel. However because of the increasing sophistication of young adults, authors began to write "New Realism" fiction in the late 1960s; the problem novel replaced the teen romance.

At the beginning of the 1980s, publishers decided to reintroduce the innocent teen romance. Most of these recent books have formulas which are similar to those of the 40s and 50s, but significant contrasts exist in treatment of female sex roles and the degree of realism. I want to compare and contrast female sex roles in teen romances during two distinct periods, 1942-1963 and 1980-1985. For the earlist period, I looked at representative novels by five popular authors: Betty Cavanna, Beverly Cleary, Maureen Daly, Rosamond du Jardin and Mary Stolz. For the 1980s, I examined representative books from five popular series: *Sweet Dreams*, *Sweet Valley High*, *Two Hearts*, *Wildfire* and *Young Love*

I will compare the books in the two periods in several ways to determine if the girls and women portrayed in the more recent books are more or less stereotyped than those who are presented in the earlier books. I want to consider the types of women role models, the relationships between mothers and daughters, the relationships among girls, the extent to which a girl's identity is based upon her romantic attachment to a boy, the treatment of girls' career aspirations and the depiction of the girl's emotional, moral and intellectual characteristics. Finally, I will consider the reasons why teen romances are popular. The ultimate question which I want to raise is: Can these books do harm?

One of the sharpest contrasts which exists between the earlier books and those of the 1980s is the extent to which women work for pay. Of the 23 books I evaluated from the 40s, 50s and early 60s, I found seven women who work for pay, and with one exception, they work out of sheer necessity or for totally altruistic motives. Three of the women are widows, and all three of them support themselves through jobs which are located in their homes. Beverly Cleary in *Sister of the Bride* presents the only woman who works outside of the home simply because she wished to do so, and the picture is very negative. Mrs. Cunningham commutes to San Francisco to write advertising copy for a chain of women's stores. She is looked down upon by the other women in her home town, and Cleary makes it quite evident that her teenage son suffers from her absence.

In the books from the 1980s, the majority of the women work outside the home, and they do so for a variety of reasons. There are widows, divorcees and less affluent women who must work, but there are also those who do so because they want to. The authors present a wider variety of jobs. There are secretaries, teachers, jazzercise instructors, interior designers and women who are returning to school to become lawyers and marriage counselors. But the depiction of a greater diversity of working women is not an entirely positive development. Often women who work outside the home are shown as neglecting their families. Women who do not work outside the home do not fare much better than those who do. Those who stay at home are over-protective, neurotic, money-spending, status conscious bores.

Regardless of whether the mothers work outside the home or not, the books of the 80s place a great emphasis on the fact that mothers and daughters cannot communicate with each other. Part of this is natural; teenagers are at a point in their development when they are trying to separate from their parents and determine their own identities. However, mothers are shown to be in the wrong more often than fathers. There is one major exception to this generalization. There is a strong bonding scene between mother and daughter in Gloria D. Miklowitz's *The Day the Senior Class Got Married*. Lori and her mother are able to spend a Saturday alone, and in spite of her doubts about Lori's plans to marry immediately upon graduation from high school, her mother is able to understand some of her daughter's feelings of excitement.

To some extent, in the 1980s, the fictional relationships between mothers and daughters have changed, but these changes have not necessarily been for the better. In the romance books of the 1940s and 1950s mothers were perfect and spend their time dewy-eyed as they relive their youth vicariously through their daughters' dating experiences. Except for trivial matters, which are treated humorously, these mothers understand their daughters. Current-day mothers are flawed, and this should be an improvement because it should indicate a trend toward greater realism. However, the more recent depictions of mothers are not better because mothers are often blamed for everything, and most of the flaws which mothers show are based on stereotypes.

While there has been considerable change in the types of mothers and the types of mother-daughter relationships presented in current teen romances, very little change has occurred in the relationships among close girl friends. Girl friends still spend a great deal of time discussing clothes, boys and their competitive feelings toward other girls who are dating boys in whom they are interested. Repeatedly, authors show girls who decide, guiltily, to spend less time with their girl friends when they become more serious about a particular boy.

While little has changed for the better in the ways in which the female protagonists of the 80s deal with their mothers and girl friends, these books are an improvement in the ways in which they treat girls' career aspirations. In the books of the 40s, 50s and early 60s, girls aspire to nothing higher than being an appendage to a boy. In these earlier novels, when girls say that they wish to have a career, two things are evident: (1) They are thinking of working only until the right man comes along. (2) They are very inarticulate and indecisive about just what it is that they want to do other than be wives and mothers.

In the newer books, most girls still want to identify

themselves as some boy's girl friend, but they also plan to go to college and to work. For the most part, the girls are thinking seriously about what they want to study. Their choices range from social worker, psychologist, marine biologist, to journalist.

If the newer books represent an improvement in the treatment of girls' career aspirations, the depiction of girls' emotional, moral and intellectual characteristics are mixed when compared with the earlier books. The novels of the 40s, 50s and 60s handle girls' personality and intellectual characteristics in a very stereotyped fashion. Most of the girls are helpless without males. Yet, true to their sex, they are compassionate and self-sacrificing where the men in their lives are concerned. Rosamond du Jardin presents the idea that women like to feel anguish at the hands of their men. In *Wait for Marcy*, Ken tells Steve: "Women always go for the rugged, independent guys who make 'em suffer."

Almost all of the girls in the earlier novels are quite aware of what Melissa Mullis Kaufman in her study of sex roles in adolescent literature has called the rules of "the game"--i.e. the means whereby one can catch an eligible boy. These guidelines are based on qualities which are very negative--indirection, manipulation and deceit. At the top of the list is the rule that a girl should be interesting, but never acknowledge that she is brighter than the boy in whom she is interested.

It is difficult to generalize about the depiction of girls' emotional, moral and intellectual characteristics in the books of the 80s because there is a wide variation in the amount of stereotyping which is done in different series and by different authors within the same series. Generally, girls are still self-sacrificing, and sometimes they are martyrs. But, there are exeptions. Sweet Valley High's *When Love Dies* is the ultimate soap opera and one of the most stereotyped books regardless of period. Tricia Martin is dying of leukemia. She handles her problem like the ultimate martyr. She will not tell her boy friend, Steven, about her illness because she does not want him to share her suffering. She pretends that she is interested in another boy. Steven finds out the truth through the intervention of his younger sister, Elizabeth. Tricia is completely blameless, for she has not revealed her terrible news. By contrast, in *The Day the Senior Class Got Married*, Lori Banks is not willing to forego attending the college of her choice because her marriage to Garrick Hamilton might provide the stabilizing influence he needs to grow up.

Girls of the 80s are not beyond playing "the game" to get or keep boys interested. Becky's best friend, Dee, in Jill Ross Klevin's *That's My Girl* claims to be a feminist, but that does not prevent her from playing what Becky calls "mind games" with the boy in her life. In short, she resorts to indirection, deception and manipulation to keep her current boy friend interested.

There are some novels which show female protagonists as emotionally strong and intelligent. In C. S. Adler's *Roadside Valentine*, the author, to some extent, lays to rest the idea that boys do not like bright, strong young women. Jamie Landes, a boy who is a misfit, who has had problems with drugs, but who is reasonably intelligent and athletic, likes Louisa Murphy, who is "class president, busy, popular and good at everything." Vince Brunelli, Louisa's domineering boy friend, is only interested in destroying her spirit. For once, a girl chooses a boy, Jamie, not because he is a safe, respectable choice, but because he appreciates her talents.

Despite what I had expected, my consideration of the similarities and differences between the teen romances of the 1940s to 1960s with those of the 1980s demonstrates that the new novels, with some notable exceptions, are as stereotyped in their own way as those of the earlier period. A careful study of these books has led me to differ sharply with the conclusion reached by Parrish and Atwood (1986). For the most part, the newer novels do not present more positive women role models. The mother-daughter relationships in the newer books are more contentious than those of the older period. Authors still rely on stereotypes like the dumb blonde flirt. Young girls still want to think of themselves as a certain boy's girl friend. Friendships among girls have not changed much.

In spite of the weaknesses of the newer novels, there have been some positive changes. Some of the girls in a few of the more recent books are brighter, stronger and career-oriented. Although feminism is not usually presented in a positive light, in one book, Jane Claypool Miner's *Senior Dreams Can Come True*, the author does present a likeable, strong feminist mother who is going to law school. I only wish that the books with positive images were the rule rather than the exception.

If the teen romances of the 80s are for the most part unrealistic and contain stereotyped characters, I want to ask two questions: (1) Why are they so popular? and (2) Do these books have the potential to do harm? Maria Ricardi, who interviewed young readers of romances, suggests that the reason why teen romances are so popular is that young adult girls, like their adult counterparts, are looking for escape from the tensions and realities of everyday life (1983).

In contrast to what Parrish and Atwood suggest, there is probably a potential for the books in the teen romance series to do harm. It seems evident that reading stereotyped literature helps to reinforce the stereotypes that are apparent in real life, while reading nonstereotyped literature can challenge what exists in the real world. If this assumption is true, then most of these books are going to perpetuate stereotypes. These books also give girls false hopes about what romance is like. For example, popular, athletic boys are not necessarily going to be attracted to bright, but unattractive girls.

What my examination of the romances of the 40s, 50s, 60s and 80s has shown is that the newer books are not a vast improvement over the older ones--many of which are being reissued with slick covers. The few books which show strong girls and women are the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, the bulk of these books offer unrealistic reassurances and reinforce stereotypes which already exist in daily life.

APPENDIX

ROMANCES

1942-1963

Beverly Cleary:
Fifteen. Dell, 1956.
Jean and Johnny. Dell, 1959.
The Luckiest Girl. Dell, 1958.
Sister of the Bride. Dell, 1963.

Betty Cavanna:
Almost Like Sisters. Morrow, 1963.
Angel on Skis. Morrow, 1957.
Fancy Free. Morrow, 1961.
Lasso Your Heart. Westmister, 1952.
Painbox Summer. With decorations by Peter Hunt. Westminster, 1949.
The Boy Next Door. Morrow, 1956.

Maureen Daly:
Seventeenth Summer. Pocket Books, 1942.

Rosamond du Jardin:
Class Ring. Lippincott, 1951.
Double Date. Lippincott, 1951.
Practically Seventeen. Lippincott, 1949.
Showboat Summer. Berkley, 1955.
Wait for Marcy. Lippincott, 1950.

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NONFICTION: NEWS FROM ALAN AND BEYOND

News from ALAN

ALAN is pleased to announce the establishment of the ALAN Foundation for Research in Young Adult Literature. Supported with contributions from publishers and a small apportionment of membership dues, this foundation is designed to provide financial help with the costs of research, including dissertation research, in adolescent literature. Each year the ALAN Foundation will consider requests for funding and will try to support those, up to $500 per project, that are deemed worthy by the Foundation Board. The availability of funding and the quality of proposals will be two major determiners used by the Foundation Board to make its decisions. The Foundation Board is composed of the five most recent past presidents of ALAN.

Applications for funding must be submitted by September 30 each year; announcement of the Board's decisions will be made at the ALAN breakfast at the NCTE Convention in late November. Additionally, applicants for support will receive written communication in November of the Board's decision.

The one-page application form will be distributed to ALAN members via a spring newsletter. For additional forms or information, write **Ted Hipple**, Executive Secretary of ALAN, College of Education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996.

President Don Gallo has appointed the Nominations/Elections committee made up of **Pat Kelly**, Chair, **Ruth Cline** and **Bob Probst**. The ALAN Awards committee is composed of **Bobbi Samuels**, Chair, **Liz Belden**, **Ken Donelson** and **Elizabeth Poe**.

Convention News

Before you know it your registration form for the 1987 NCTE Convention in Los Angeles, California, will be in your mailbox. When you register for the convention, held November 20-25, don't forget to register for the two day ALAN Workshop, November 23-24. The Workshop, "Connecting with the Past, with Students and with Film," will feature authors such as **S. E. Hinton**. In addition you will have the opportunity to participate in several small group sessions with university faculty and teachers who teach young adult literature.

Also remember to look for the ALAN Breakfast in your NCTE packet of information, held Saturday, November 21, at which time two ALAN Awards will be presented, one to an author and the other to a scholar in the field of young adult literature. The speaker at the breakfast will be author **Maureen Daly**.

Awards

"Children's Books Open Doors," sponsored by the joint committee of NCTE and the Children's Book Council, is a competition designed to recognize teachers (K-8) who enrich their students' learning through children's literature. The meaningful literature experience, described by the teacher, must grow out of the reading of a single trade book or a group of books. In addition to perceptive thought, emotional insight and creative expression, the committee will be looking for ideas that can be replicated by other teachers. The eight winning entries will be featured in *Learning* magazine. The teacher will receive $500 worth of children's trade books from CBC member publishers. Deadline for submission is September 1, 1987. For submission information and application forms, send a self-addressed, stamped #10 envelope to Children's Book Council, Attention: Open Doors, 67 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

Colorado's teenagers have selected **Katherine Paterson's** *Bridge to Terabithia* as the winner of the 1986 Colorado Blue Spruce Award. Paterson's book was chosen by 2,400 teenagers from a list of 27 books nominated by Colorado secondary students.

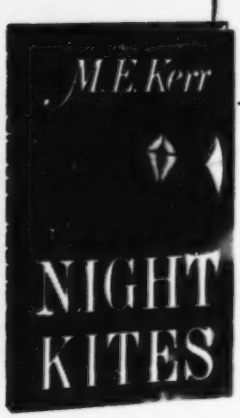
ALAN member **Joan Nist**, Auburn University, has been selected the recipient of the 1987 Alabama Intellectual Freedom Award, presented by the Alabama Library Association.

1987 ALA Recommended Books for Reluctant Young Adult Readers

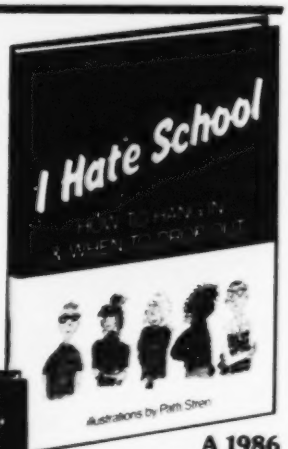
A 1986 Best Book for Young Adults
Ages 11 up. $11.25*
$10.89† Harper

A *Charlotte Zolotow* Book
Ages 12 up.
$11.70* $11.89†
Harper

Ages 12 up. $11.25*
$11.89† Harper



A 1986 Best Book for Young Adults
A *Charlotte Zolotow* Book
Ages 12 up. $11.25*
$10.89† Harper



A 1986 Best Book for Young Adults
Ages 12 up.
$11.70* $11.89†
Trophy paperback
(JN-054) $7.95**
Crowell

Harper & Row
10 E. 53rd St., New York 10022
1817

*Invoice price, trade ed. **Suggested consumer price, paper ed.
†Library ed. Publisher's price only and in no way reflects the price at which available from any other source.

News from Publishers

An enchanting book came across my desk the other day, **Alan Heath's** *Off the Wall*. The book, which gives hundreds of ideas for displaying classroom and library books, is likely to delight teachers and benefit students. In addition to display ideas, the author gives bibliographies appropriate for thematic displays, patterns for making the displays and ideas for extending the displays to experiences. (Heath, Alan. *Off the Wall*. Libraries Unlimited, P.O. Box 263, Littleton, Colorado 80160-0263. $19.50.)

The Book in a Technological Society: Symposium Proceeding, sponsored by Friends of the Cooperative Children's Book Center in Madison, Wisconsin, is an excellent anthology of six articles in defense of books by **Charlotte Huck, Paul Grendler, Fritz Eichenberg, Jean E. Karl, Betsy Hearne** and **Eliza Dresang**. This book is salve for the soul of every lover of the printed word. To receive a copy of this book send $7.95 (this includes postage and handling) to Friends of the CCBC, Inc., P.O. Box 5288, Madison, WI 53705.

New American Library has a new edition of *Librarian's Guide: Young Adult Paperbacks*. Originally written by **Dorothy M. Broderick** in 1977 and subsequently updated in 1982 by **Mary K. Chelton**. These two editors of *Voice of Youth Advocates* have joined forces to bring professionals up-to-date on the latest titles and trends in the YA field. The guide will be sent free to interested *ALAN Review* readers. To receive your free copy, send a 6 x 9 self-addressed, stamped envelope with $.39 first class postage to: Gayle Greeno, NAL, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019.

The Care and Feeding of a Visiting Author: Tips for Successful Personal Appearances, published by the Educational Marketing Committee of the Paperback Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers, addresses such issues as preliminary planning and budgeting, choosing the right format for the event, contacting the author, making travel and hotel arrangements, organizing an autographing, publicizing the appearance and other key ingredients for a successful author visit. For a free copy send a self-addressed, stamped #10 envelope to: **Jackie Maldonado**, Author Visit Brochure, Association of American Publishers, 220 E. 23 Street, New York, NY 10010. Quantities of the brochure may be purchased at the cost of $2.50/25 copies.

Children's Literature: A Guide to the Criticism by **Linnea Hendrickson** has been published by G. K. Hall. The 696 page book is an annotated bibliography that brings together significant critical analyses of both children's and young adult literature. The book annotates reviews by literature scholars, historians, psychologists, sociologists and art critics. For more information contact: G. K. Hall, 70 Lincoln St., Boston, MA 02111.

For fans of **Virginia Hamilton's** *The House of Dies Drear* there is finally a sequel. *The Mystery of Drear House* has been published by Greenwillow Books. In this sequel Hamilton calls upon the characters of her earlier book, Thomas Small, Mr. Pluto, Pesty and Macky Darrow to solve the perplexing problem of how the rightful ownership of a hundred-year-old, priceless treasure is to be decided. Mystery fans will not want to miss this book.

Help for Writers

The NCTE Committee on Professional Writing Networks for Teachers and Supervisors is available to help writers of professional articles. Send partially completed or fully completed manuscripts to **Gail E. Tompkins**, University of Oklahoma, College of Education, 820 Van Vleet Oval, Norman, Ok 73019. Manuscripts will be sent to a committee member who will read and respond to it and return it with suggestions.

A Correction

ALAN Review reader **Mat Grau**, a teacher at Jesuit High School, New Orleans, Louisiana, has called the following to our attention. "In . . . (the) article 'Bridging the Basics: The Young Adult Novel in a Back-to-Basics Society,' (the authors) note that *The Chocolate War* is 'the story of a student in a Jesuit high school.' Nowhere in Robert Cormier's novel are we told that Trinity High is a Jesuit high school. In fact, Trinity is staffed by religious brothers, while Jesuit schools are staffed by priests, for the most part."

Conference Report

Joan Nist, Auburn University, reports on the recent Pacific Rim Conference on Children's Literature:

Though internationalism in children's and young adults' literature is developing, United States' awareness of this has been gradual, probably because of the plentitude of American material and the primacy of English. For years, a "Loughborough" (so named for its English origin) international conference was held, usually in Europe, though also hosted by the U.S., Canada and Australia.

These three English-speaking countries have also presented a newer conference, with an Asia-Americas-Oceania focus. Begun in 1976 in Canada, held again in Australia in 1979, the Pacific Rim Conference met a third time in 1986 on the UCLA campus. Dominated by U.S. speakers and participants (100 of the 150 attendees were Californians), it gave insights into the achievements and

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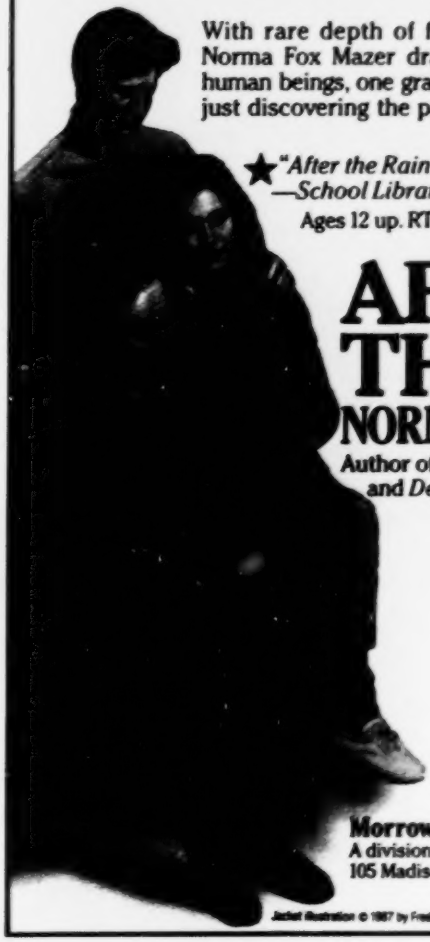
Growing old can be just as hard as growing up

Rachel's grandfather is not an easy man to love. He's gruff, surly, opinionated. But when he falls gravely ill, Rachel becomes his reluctant caretaker. What starts as a chore gradually becomes the most important part of her life—even more important than her new relationship with her very first boyfriend.



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AFTER THE RAIN

NORMA FOX MAZER

Author of *Taking Terri Mueller*, *Downtown*, and *Dear Bill, Remember Me?*

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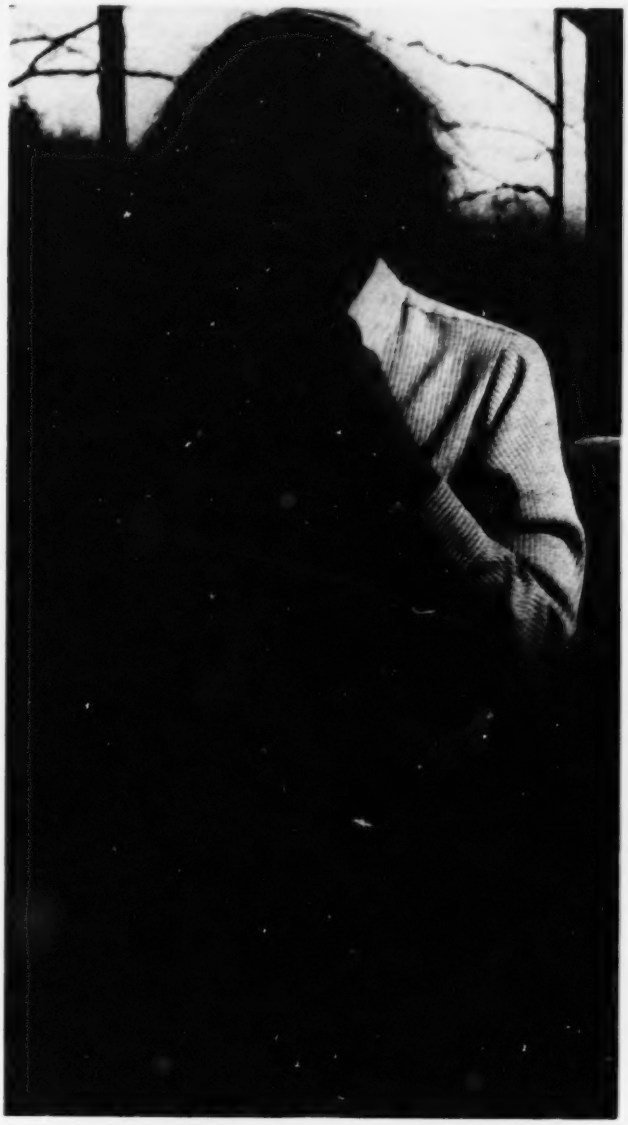
AUTHORS TALK ABOUT THEIR WRITING, READING, LEARNING AND TEACHING
(Three Articles)

WHY I WRITE.... WHY I WRITE WHAT I WRITE

Norma Fox Mazer
Jamesville, New York



At the age of 28 I became serious about writing. I was then, on the apparent evidence, an adult: married, with three small children, doing adult things like remembering my mother's birthday, paying bills and not whining when I had to go to the dentist. At that time, I had already gone through more than at least ten years of a certain kind of cycle: dreaming of being a writer, beginning stories but never finishing them, making excuses to myself for my lack of consistency and then fantasizing about *something happening*: an overnight miracle, the transformation of unknown me into a *Real Writer*. The final stage of this cycle was telling myself, calmly, maturely, with common sense, that it was only a dream, that it might never happen and that this was fine because I could be happy, even so, since I had Harry and my kids. Of course I was lying to myself.

When, at last, I had had enough dithering around, enough waiting for the miracle, I made a pact with Harry that each of us would write an hour a day, come what might. When, in short, I rejected common sense and threw myself into learning the craft with the intent of becoming a published writer, it was in some ways like a reversion to adolescence: the dream and the belief in the dream springing up fresh as a flower in my heart.

Yes, definitely, I was an adolescent again, in love with writing, in a fever of desire, doing crazy things like getting up at 3:30 a.m. to write and neglecting important, grown-up things like housework. Besides, just like any adolescent, I was convinced that we five -and then six- in our family needed no more than love plus the bare minimum of dollars to live on.

It seems to me now that it really was only during the next number of years when that dream became a reality that I did, in fact, grow up. I don't mean that I left the dream behind, but that, in making it happen, I found a kind of confidence I had never had before. And that, also, through and in the writing, I began dealing with certain aspects of my life, asking myself some questions and even answering them, although often unknowingly.

Perhaps all of that is at least a partial explanation of why I find myself now asking another question, one which I never asked when I began writing: why *do* I write?

Writing, it seems to me, is always preceded by reading. For me, reading, as opposed to being read to, begins one day when I am four-years-old and in Sunday School. I am sitting at a little green table with other children. A large adult person with a blurry face as distant as the sun is talking. I lean on my hand and look carefully at a picture in *My Big Book of Jewish Bible Stories*, feeling sad and sorry about poor Joseph who was so meanly treated by his big brothers. (I have a big sister and empathize deeply with Joseph.) Joseph is sleeping in a ditch, wrapped in his beautiful

coat of many colors. I look for a long time at this picture, wondering if he's going to get wet in this ditch, and then I look back at the little black squiggles on the page and, as I do, they leap into focus and become words.

Since that moment I have read insatiably. But the reading has always been so tangled with fantasizing, daydreaming and telling myself stories that it's difficult to find where one left off the other began. Conscious recollection is of always making better selves, better worlds, of always finding imagination more satisfying than reality. There are family pictures of me at five and six and seven, and in those pictures I seem constantly to have either a book or a little pad and pencil in my hand.

A conscious desire to write arose in adolescence, around the age of 13, although reading still overshadowed writing. I wrote for the school newspaper. I wrote themes that satisfied my English teachers. I began a novel and got two pages into it before I gave it up. It was in other people's stories that I found other worlds and information about life and people and how to live. I found escape from the limitations of myself, I found heroes and heroines, bravery and kindness and, perhaps most of all, I found a sweet forgetfulness. As soon as I picked up a book, all the things I disliked about myself, all the problems I had, everything petty and disturbing disappeared.

I read at home; I read at school. I remember being in a classroom and reading a library book tucked inside a dull textbook. All through high school I avoided the sciences because they lacked stories and required learning a kind of information I found dry and difficult. History I loved because history is story telling. English, of course, because English at its best was reading. But chemistry, physics, higher math -no! I paid for that avoidance when I went to Antioch and found myself in a required physics class. I hadn't the least notion of such basic -but, to me, esoteric- things as the laws of motion. If only, I remember thinking, if only there was a story I could read that would make it all clear.

I often thought it and not just in physics class. Perhaps that's why I write. Perhaps I'm still looking for a story that will make it all clear.

All through my adolescence, I had an acute sense of being different, an outsider. I was never "cool," either in its literal meaning (I blushed often and hotly) or its symbolic meaning. I was never "in" (another word which teenagers use so well); I was always on the periphery, on the edge, on the outside, peering in. This was, in fact, the way I saw my Junior Prom, standing at a window with a girlfriend, both of us on tiptoes, looking into the gym, which was decorated with long loops of green and yellow crepe paper.

So perhaps that's why I write. To stand again and again on tiptoes, peering into that window, trying to understand why some people dance and some people watch.

When I was growing up, girls were very much at the mercy of boys. Boys felt quite free to make remarks about the girls as they walked in the halls, to snicker and look them up and down. Some girls whose breasts were "too big" were called "sweater girls." Girls were meant to pretend they were unaware of this humiliating attention. They were meant to cast their eyes down or smile prettily. Girls were not meant to be tough or clever or smart. Of course, there were girls who were all these things; one of the Junior Prom attendants was even known to be a very smart girl, but this was okay because she was "in." She lived in the right part of our hometown and her boyfriend was on the baseball team.

It was a very complex social world with all of the rules unwritten. My understanding of this world was rudimentary, tangled in my own unease, my own sense of always standing on one foot. I was a girl, but not an "in" girl. I had too many strikes against me: I lived on the wrong side of town. I was Jewish. I had opinions. I didn't know how to make small talk or flirt. I didn't have a steady boyfriend. I was "serious," as well, with political ideals. None of these things gave status.

Besides all this, my family was not religious and not observant. The small Jewish community in Glens Falls had their collective eye on the other members. We were approved of because all three of us Fox girls were bright and therefore brought honor to the community, but we were disapproved of for our politics, and for other things like eating bacon, shopping on Saturdays and for not observing even the high holy days. I was "different," then, even inside the little world of the Jewish community.

And so perhaps that's why I write. To explore the feeling of being "different," of being "other."

Hitler and fascism haunted my childhood, as the stories of the Holocaust and the "disappearances" in Argentina and torture in Chile and jailing of children in South Africa continue to haunt my adulthood. As a teenager I thought often about God and the meaning of life. I could never understand why people suffered only because they were Jews. I didn't then understand the scapegoat theory of history. I didn't then know that though the Jews had suffered deeply, so had many other groups of people. I was young and it hurt me to be the recipient of hatred. I didn't hate, and I didn't know why anyone hated me.

Once when I was about 13, a girl came to our back door to bring me a message, delivered, she said, in the spirit of friendship. Lillian was a large, excitable, messy, freckled girl. She was large and tough. She was dirty faced and lived on the same "wrong" side of town as I did. She said that someone we both knew had said something not nice about me.

I knew at once, in some half instinctive way, what this something was. I asked, "Did she call me a dirty Jew?"

"Yes," Lillian said, with enormous pleasure, "that's right! She called you a dirty Jew." Then she added, perhaps in a spirit of sisterhood, "Want me to beat her up?" And I saw, something I knew I would never forget, Lillian's dirty freckled face and her smile of satisfaction at a good deed well done.

Perhaps that's why I became a writer. So that I could write this scene, in one way or another, again and again.

A child wrote to me about *Mrs. Fish, Ape, and Me, the Dump Queen*, the book in which I most directly take on the question of "otherness": "It happen to me before, because I am small, but no one has talked about it yet."

Another child wrote me about the same book, "I hope you now (sic) your book discribes (sic) my life! Love, Your Friend (sic), Marion."

I keep this letter pinned on my bulletin board. Every day before I begin work, I see it. I don't get tired of looking at it. Nor do I lose the tender feelings it arouses in me.

So perhaps, finally, that's why I write what I write: to connect to all the Marions, to tell them through my stories something about their own lives, and then to go one step farther, to tell them something else about the world and themselves: that they can be hopeful and courageous, and that they aren't alone.

Books by Norma Fox Mazer

I, Trissy. Delacorte, 1971, Dell, 1986.
A Figure of Speech. Dell, 1975.
Saturday, The Twelfth of October. Dell, 1976.
Dear Bill, Remember Me? and Other Stories. Dell, 1978.
The Solid Gold Kid. with Harry Mazer. Delacorte, 1977, Dell, 1978.
Up In Seth's Room. Dell, 1981.
Mrs. Fish, Ape, and Me, the Dump Queen. Dutton, 1980, Avon, 1984.
Taking Terri Mueller. Avon, 1981, Morrow, 1981.

continued on page 59

WRITING AS A YOUNG ADULT

Tamela Larimer
Pennsylvania State University
State College, Pennsylvania

Having my first novel published has been for me at 19 such a rewarding experience that I wish I could grant the same opportunity to every aspiring young writer.

Beyond this wish, however, it's difficult for me to say what real advice I would have for any of those novelists-to-be. I have always viewed writing as a highly personal effort, and I find a concrete definition of the creative act elusive. Of all the guidelines I've read or heard, it seems the only notable consistencies are "nothing works for everyone," and "do what feels best for you." While understanding and agreeing with the truth in those general principles, as a high school student trying to "make it happen" I nevertheless found them dissatisfying. At the same time, attempting specific recommendations such as setting aside a certain time each day for writing proved frustrating when the *Ultimate Story* didn't immediately pour from my soul.

So what did I do? I wrote anyway. I wrote because it was in me to write. Three things I had going for me: love of the written word, love of daydreaming and a definite desire to share what I dreamed. I know without a doubt that had I been lacking even one of those characteristics I'd never have saved in writing scenarios fantasized during algebra class that became continuing slices of a particular character's adventures, that grew into chapters, that eventually meshed into a book.

It would be easy to stop with that, leaving the mystique of the creative act basically untouched. I believe my appreciation, and especially my enjoyment, of art would be sadly reduced if I had detailed, structured, mechanical formula with which to categorize every piece, and the same goes for my attitude toward writing. Despite this conviction, though, I have to admit--just a little reluctantly--that there was and is more to the writing process for me than pure inspiration and desire.

Encouragement has been invaluable, especially at the point when I had decided that a writer was what I wanted to be, even though I wasn't quite sure how one went about becoming one. Particularly helpful in this respect was my high school creative writing teacher, Mrs. Loretta White. After patiently critiqueing a spate of overly romantic Civil War stories, she gave me a piece of advice I've kept firmly in mind to this day. She told me, "Why don't you try writing what you know?"

This was a turning point. I hadn't realized that my own seemingly mundane experiences could be made, through creative writing, into something others found appealing. I learned to draw from a source with which I was thoroughly and intimately acquainted. Details were now realistic and accurate rather than invented. Of course, my first attempts at "writing what I knew" produced some incredibly corny material, but then I stopped trying too hard, and came up with much better stuff. Eventually, growing confidence with writing what I knew led to the creation of the high school social structure so integral to *Buck*.

Another unmysterious key to comfortable writing I relied on as a high school student was to read, read, read. I rely on reading now --high school being not so far in my past--and I'm sure I'll rely on it in the future. Reading recharges the literary batteries. Nothing is as refreshing as a long classic when inspiration ebbs low. Words stockpile in the brain. The greater the contrast another's style presents to one's own, the looser one's mental block becomes.

Beginning writers often are told that they should read, read, read, for the purpose of studying proven authors. With this I agree entirely. However, I have difficulty with the idea of beginning to explore the craft by imitation of these authors, which often seems to be the intent of being told to read, read, read. I believe individual style is present from day one and that promoting it through structured imitation of others is a dampening factor. Rather, comparison is more useful. Comparison encourages free expression while at the same time getting across basic concepts such as plot, character and setting.

Now for the biggest contradiction to the mystique of fiction writing--rewriting. Often disagreeable, sometimes very rewarding, it's just about always necessary. I'd like to believe I could hack out the perfect story each time I pick up my pen--or turn on my processor, if that's the case--but that isn't so. Sure, I could pick out a few miscellaneous survivor passages here and there that have somehow come out just right. Those are rare. Usually strong, conscious effort is involved.

Brainwhacking, in other words.

And brainwhacking is something fellow adolescent writers and I believe we should never have to do. Writing should be pure and from the heart! If the first time around is no good, then it will never be any good. Rewriting carries an unspoken stigma--if you don't get it right the first time, are you really the "artist" you think you are?

Fortunately, I learned otherwise, again through teaching and encouragement, and quite a bit of trial and error. What I personally would say to a novice writer balking at dreary rewrites is, "Try it. You'll like it. Uh, maybe. But it's definitely worth it." Not concrete advice, but it's worked.

Now, in a general, completely unstructured way, I'll throw in a few last odd suggestions I would give young writers. I don't have any hard evidence to back these statements. They're purely intuitive. But I like them.

One: Keep at it. Write and write some more. Perseverence pays. Surely, somewhere among a mass of quantity will be some quality. Find the quality pieces, figure out why they are quality pieces and then use all that's been learned in a single piece. Better now?

Two: No pain, no gain. A cliche, but useful to remember in more than one situation--writer's block, for one. It's not comforting, but it combats discouragement.

Three: Don't be afraid to pat yourself on the back--in private, preferably.

Last but not least, to the young writer: Remember that nothing works for everyone. Do what feels best for you.

Editor's Note: Tamela Larimer is the winner of the Avon/Flare "by teenagers for teenagers" novel competition for *Buck*, (Avon, 1986). See pp. 54-55 of this issue for an excerpt from the novel.

DISENCHANTMENT OVERDOSE - A NEW THREAT TO YOUTH?

Phyllis Anderson Wood
South San Francisco, California

A windfall finally brought welcome relief from the lean times in our high school district, and the delighted English staff met to coordinate textbook purchases. With our wish lists before us, we began to compare notes.

"Hey, Mark, I see you're ordering a new novel. What's its theme?"

"It's the American dream gone belly-up."

"Great. That will tie in nicely with the two novels I use about the loss of the dream."

It was an exemplary exchange for an English meeting. Good teachers; good literature; good communications. So, why was my mind sending out a red alert as I listened?

At the time, I couldn't define my alarm; but later, as I reran the conversation through my mind, a pattern emerged. These harmless-enough words were bringing into focus a nagging fear I've been harboring for some time--the fear that this generation of young people may soon be absorbing toxic amounts of disenchantment.

Reared under the threat of nuclear extinction, by parents whose own value systems were subjected to the stresses of the turbulent 60s, this generation of young people is adrift in an era of blurred dreams. Having reached an age when it's natural to look beyond the home for role models, they are attentive to the most insistent voices around them--their radios, stereos, TVs and videotapes. Think of the messages, filtered through troubled times and troubled adult minds, that our students are ingesting in steady doses.

If we could somehow measure the amounts of violence, insensitivity, fear and emptiness today's young people are exposed to through the media and in real life, we probably would be shocked by how many of them are truly at risk before they ever pick up one of our books in the classroom.

In the light of this new vulnerability, it may be that the role of the English teacher in using literature needs to change. This, of course, is not a proposal to ban negative books or eliminate the study of tragedy, or rule out searching dialogue. It is rather the suggestion that we English teachers can be sensitive to the total intellectual and emotional intake of our students, and try to counter the negative input with additional readings and discussions that offer some hope, point the way to creative problem solving and help the young establish solid values whereby they can formulate new dreams to replace crumbling ones, both for themselves and for society.

In this capacity young adult novels can perform a unique service. In reading about contemporary characters coping with situations which are often familiar to the reader, young people are allowed to try on imaginary roles and experiment with a variety of imaginary actions without risk. And since young adult novels generally offer some light at the end of the tunnel, readers of these novels are presented with the possibility that they, too, can surmount and survive their problems.

My own interest in the creative use of young adult novels as a balancing factor in the curriculum stems from two sources. I have taught high school English and reading for 25 years, and I also have written 12 young adult novels. My first 11 books were written in response to the need I perceived in my own classes for easier-reading novels with enough substance to generate mature discussion in remedial or English as second language classes. My most recent one, however--*Then I'll Be Home Free*, is directed to the need I'm presently sensing for new contemporary young adult novels that are suitable for regular rather than remedial classes.

One of the themes of my new novel, ironically, is the loss of a dream, which occurs when a beloved grandmother dies unexpectedly. Loss, however, is shown to be part of the fabric of life, and so is the healing process that follows the grief cycle. The reader can see growth and maturity emerging from pain as the characters work their way through the dark times into the light again.

It has been my experience that young adult novels are able to touch students on a very personal level and often in a therapeutic way. When young readers discover a book that speaks to their needs and their dreams it's a passionate relationship. I've watched students read the same book over and over again, each time finding something new in it, and each time probably discovering a fresh way to organize their own feelings about some personal experience. It would be hard to measure the intensity of the impact or the depth of the influence that the right young adult novel presented at the right moment can have; yet, I have watched the phenomenon enough times to feel profound respect for it.

Along with this respect, I also feel a dual sense of responsibility in the presence of young adult novels: on one hand, as the teacher who exposes students to books in the classroom, and on the other hand, as an author who writes books that end up in the hands of the young. For me, the two operations, writing and teaching, are inseparable.

I can't claim the independence of an author I once met who stated that authors don't write for children. "We're just published for children," she said. "Books are written for oneself."

Being a teacher/author, this frame of reference wouldn't work for me. If I didn't write for young people, I'd be creating books that would not serve me well in the classroom. As I create a story, I see before me an endless parade of actual people--the real Randalls and Monicas and Debbies and Mikes, with all their anxieties and hopes and angers and loves. I want to write something helpful for them.

Books convey definite impressions of life, positive or negative, hopeful or cynical, enthusiastic or jaded. Seeing despair just below the surface in so many young people these days, I don't feel I'm compromising my artistic integrity when I offer the reader some positive affirmations on the value of life, when I focus on the resilience of the human spirit, and hint at the possibility of happiness. On the contrary, I would feel a sense of betrayal to my young readers if I didn't present some models for living life sensitively and compassionately, if I didn't suggest that adulthood has its rewards. It seems unfair for the young to be exposed constantly to the cynicism that plagues society without being offered an alternative view of life.

It would be easy to misinterpret my position. I'm not in favor of secluding teenagers in a fairy-tale world, or sheltering them from a broad sampling of opinions, or excluding them from realistic decision making. One of the qualities I value most highly in the young is a clear-headed openness that can look without fear or guilt at different sides of many issues, including, among other

things, the loss of the dream. To me, education means broad exposure. But, in a day and age when negative forces dominate the media and young people are getting prolonged exposure to these influences, I feel that integrity and decency and goodness and compassion should at least be given equal time.

This is where teachers of literature are in a key position. While the substance of literature is life itself, a subject which encompasses the full spectrum of the human condition--the good, the bad and the indifferent--the element of selectivity is present in every classroom. Even though a book may be required by the curriculum, the choice of ideas to dwell on remains in the hands of the teacher. When presented by a positive teacher, the most despairing selection can arouse compassion and generate a healthy discussion of what went wrong and what possibilities might have existed, if only the characters could have identified them. On the other hand--and this is where the young are at risk--when presented by a teacher who is personally disenchanted, even positive reading selections can take on cynical overtones.

We are in a position to assess, in the light of our students' long-term exposure, the impact of the literature that we're offering, and to administer antidotes if necessary. If the prescribed curriculum seems top-heavy with disenchanted authors, or if the class seems top-heavy with already-depressed young people, good young adult novels can be a balancing factor. If the prescribed curriculum doesn't allow time to use these books in the classroom, they can be granted acceptability for outside reading. Either way, young adult novels, with their accessible characters, their recognizable problems and their basic faith in humanity, can provide valuable balance in the adolescent's literary diet.

Then what about our units on the death of the dream? Keep them, of course. It's a perfectly valid theme; it goes with our time in history. Let's explore it with our classes, along with other relevant themes. As we do so, however, let's be aware of the unspoken messages we're imparting to our students. When we emphasize the fact that half of the dream has died, our lesson will be negative. Yet, with the same set of facts, we have the option of showing that half of the dream has survived, a message with positive possibilities. The choice of viewpoint and emphasis is ours to make.

This doesn't mean we shouldn't count the losses, and grieve with our students over them. But, let's also help our students come to terms with their grief and move on. We can explore with them the parts of the dream that have grown better and stronger through experience and struggle. And, ultimately we can encourage them to formulate new dreams of their own for their unique time in history, dreams that may even improve on the dreams of our time. This, after all, is what teaching is about.

Go ahead and order your books on the death of the dream, Jonathan. But maybe, while the money's here, you'll want to consider also purchasing a supplementary young adult novel that affirms human possibilities. It's just possible that the seeds of hope planted or nurtured by such a book may be the balancing factor that will save some young person from a disenchantment overdose.

Books by Phyllis Anderson Wood

Andy. Westminster, 1971. Retitled *The Night Summer Began*. Scholastic.
Your Bird Is Here, Tom Thompson. Westminster, 1972, New American Library.
I've Missed A Sunset or Three. Westminster, 1973, New American Library.
Song Of The Shaggy Canary. Westminster, 1974, New American Library.
A Five-Color-Buick and A Blue-Eyed Cat. Westminster, 1975, New American Library.

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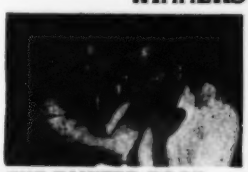
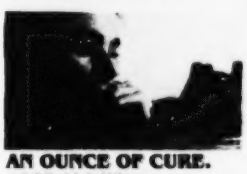


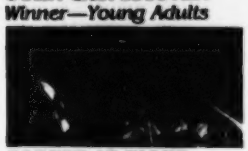
THE PAINTED DOOR. *1985 Academy Award Nominee*

THE CAP. *1986 ALA Winner—Children*

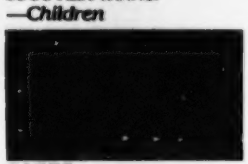


AN OUNCE OF CURE. *1986 ALA Winner —Young Adults*

JOHN CAT. *1986 ALA Winner—Young Adults*



CORNET AT NIGHT. *1986 ALA Winner —Children*



CAGES. *1986 Blue Ribbon*

BAMBINGER. *1986 Red Ribbon*

An Excerpt from *Buck*
Tamela Larimer's Avon Flare Award Winning Novel

So here it was, the first day of my–and Buck's–last year in high school. It really wasn't that exciting. The first day of first grade is so exciting it terrorizes you, and it goes downhill fast from there.

Buck and I were in the same homeroom. I in the second seat in the first row and he in the third-to-last seat in the second row, according to alphabetical order. I left him to himself–he'd told me he wanted to float on his own rather than depend on me to take him through the social maze. That was fine with me. I wouldn't have minded showing him around, but relying on himself was a lot better for him, I thought.

So I minded my own business. Talked to a few casual buddies, complained about teachers and classes, flirted a little. But out of the corner of my eye I was watching for reactions to Buck; I was careful to listen, in case anybody said anything. I guess I was interested in how my protégé was doing. Really, I should have minded my own business. But he was out on the proving ground, and I was watching because I was hoping he'd do well by me.

He was causing a reaction, all right, and this was just a little unusual.

See, usually people are pretty indifferent to somebody new. I mean, they're friendly enough and casually interested, but mostly they don't care. They're already set in their own social niches. They have their friends, and those friends belong to a certain group, and that's the way it goes. A nicheless person isn't someone to be concerned with. It's much more important to concentrate on staying where you're at or maybe even moving in the direction that looks like up.

But Buck was getting looks, second and third and fourth glances, and not just from girls. They were from everyone. People were asking each other who he was. As a matter of fact, I was asked at least twice. "Who's that kid back there? He new?"

And I would say, "Yeah, he's new. His name's Buck Dawson–he lives with us." And people would look at me in a little different light–a respectful light. That made me feel good, proud. . . almost as if I'd done something really important.

You can label a lot of people. Label them prep, jock, nerd, punk. The labels have a lot to do with looks. You dress like your group. Regular clothes might as well be uniforms. You can walk down the hall and label just about everyone who goes by, and your labels will probably be right.

But there was no label for Buck. Labels slid from him like water from wax. They just didn't stick. He was one of a kind, and whatever that kind was, it didn't have a name.

He wore a blue flannel shirt that stretched tight across his shoulders. This would have marked him as what we called a burnout, the addict type, the flunking troublemaker who skipped classes to smoke dope in the bathroom. But his shirt was buttoned, not hanging open to show off a grimy old death's-head T-shirt. His sleeves were rolled up to just under the elbow, sort of like a farmer, and he didn't have any bandannas or chains hanging off a leather belt with about fifty keys attached to them. He had Nike high-tops on his feet, not heavy old army boots, and his jeans were jock in style, snug and new, not bleached and frayed and baggy.

No, he wasn't a burnout. But he wasn't a jock, either. He was too aloof for that.

People looked at him once and twice and again and still couldn't place him. He didn't follow any identifiable social code. He was noble and alert and liquid as a twelve-point stag on a spring morning, and as elusive and magnetic. Everything about him was tawny–his hair, his eyes, his attitude. And that tawniness made him stand out in a quietly powerful way. The best people could do was figure he must've been something pretty big at his old school–how could he not be?

Oh, he was causing a stir with that look of his, all right. And even though he sat there unprepossessing and nice, from clear across the room I could feel a touch of smugness coming from deep behind those carefully amiable and noncommittal eyes. He knew that attention was for him, and he liked it.

By Monday, news of Buzz's appearance in major jock territory was all over. But when fingers pointed at Buck, Buck subtly pointed to Tony's approval–after all, Tony could have kicked Buzz out if that's what everyone had wanted. At least that's what Buck hinted–so when the gossip fire calmed down, Buck was in the clear and Tony was the dubious one.

I had my part in it. I'd seen how concerned Buck was, and I supported him up and down, and finally even Tony was half-convinced that Buck had had nothing to do with the scandal. I rode a high wave at the time; I loved being able to help the cool and self-possessed Buck, and I loved how everyone believed me. Pretty soon, I believed it myself.

When the talk died down, replaced with newer, hotter stuff, Tony seemed his arrogant self again and Buck was just another jock in a big crowd of jocks. He was accepted and absorbed and he wasn't any different from anyone else.

But there were hints of change.

First off, Buck's attitude toward Tony was still not as respectful as it should have been. Sure, he went along with Tony and was almost too careful never to blatantly cross him, but there was always an undercurrent of. . . What? Call it disregard, call it mockery, call it hate. Call it whatever you want, but it was there and it was there all the time.

I saw it, but I didn't want to, so I ignored it and tried to forget about it. That's the way it goes with things you don't want to know. You protect yourself by forgetting.

Tony felt it. I know he did. He felt it from the start, and it showed in the wary look he sometimes shot Buck and it showed in the way he sometimes gave in to Buck. Buck never let that undercurrent surface, so Tony couldn't pick it out and react to it. He couldn't find it and couldn't fight it and couldn't understand it. So he chased his tail in circles and did his best to keep face.

Editor's Note: *Buck* was selected from over 400 entries by the editors at Avon. To enter the contest the author must be between the ages of 13 and 18 at the time of submission.

Excerpted by permission of Avon books.

In the second week of October, Tina Pierce decided to have a party, a party she called her "anniversary celebration." She was hand-in-hand with Tony when she came up to Buck and me in the hall, said hi to us and Kip and Jack who were with us, and invited us to her party.

Smiling cool and golden, Buck hooked the chain with Tina's ring that hung around Tony's neck with one finger and said, casually toying with it, "You've just got this big guy leashed up for life, don't you, Tina? How do you do it?"

I cringed at that; Tony's eyes were storms. But evidently Tina was really amused, because she giggled and clutched Tony's arm and said, "Wouldn't you like to know?" Tony looked ready to kill from the humiliation, but his china doll was happy with Buck's attention, and that kept him still. There was nothing he could take offense at without being considered a jealous jerk or something. That's how it always was with Buck and Tony.

Buzz McKinney was another hint of change. In spite of my warning, Buck made friends with Buzz. That never should've happened. In the first place, Buzz didn't make friends with anybody. Joe Parriot was the closest thing Buzz had to a friend, and Joe was more like a slinky loyal kind of guard dog. And in the second place, Buck was a jock and Buzz despised jocks. But Buck had a friendly relationship with Buzz, and the friendship seemed mutual.

One day on my way to class—I was late, actually, and the halls were pretty empty—I was caught up short when I saw Buzz and Buck leaning against the wall by a fountain, laughing and talking in low voices. Forgetting all about class, I drew up close, and when Buck saw me—his back was partly to me, so I was almost on him before he saw me—he locked eyes with me, and his eyes were flat and closed. Buzz stared blank and green at me. It wasn't hostility he projected, but an icy disinterest that was worse. I felt like I'd stumbled into a secret meeting or something. Neither of them wanted me there: I was an intruder, a jock intruder.

"Uh," I said, staring hard at Buck, "going to class?"

His eyes opened then. I could see inside again. But there was still a certain reserve in them, as if something was close to the surface that I couldn't be a part of. "Yeah," he said. "Just a minute, okay?" And he turned his back to me to say, "See ya around," to Buzz.

"What was that for?" I demanded as soon as Buzz had slunk out of earshot.

Buck knew exactly what I meant. He didn't pretend not to. "He's human," he said, looking straight at me. "I told you that before."

I couldn't say anything to that. He'd just made me feel about an inch high, like I couldn't find it in me to be understanding and he could. And maybe I couldn't. It wasn't my fault I'd never had to push for a living. That didn't make me a snobbish outsider. Still—I couldn't say anything to that. This was a side of Buck I didn't know how to deal with. So I ignored it.

Another hint of change was the romance between Joe Parriot and Steph Allen. There shouldn't have been anything too strange about that—they were two-of-a-kind sleazes—except that it was a burnout-jockette romance. . . brought about by Buck Dawson, thank you. And that romance led to a big mix between the two most opposed groups of high school society.

Joe's buddies started showing up in established jock places. They came with him, and he was nominally welcome as Steph's guy. Steph's jockette girlfriends—and their jock boyfriends—started hanging out with burnout types. Steph was a partyer. Burnout or jock, it didn't matter to her, so long as she had beer.

Jock was still jock. Burnout was still burnout. The thing is, people started not to care so much.

All this was fine and good. This mixing of the social groups probably should have been happening all along. Everybody—generally—was friendly and things were fine, on the surface, anyway. The number of fights went way down. Even teachers noticed the change.

Like I said, all this was fine and good. . . except for one thing. It was happening for all the wrong reasons. It wasn't happening because of a sudden acceptance of people's differences. It wasn't happening because of any new maturity or because everyone suddenly realized you shouldn't judge a book by its cover.

It happened because it was manipulated. And it was manipulated for a single purpose.

Buck's purpose.

Politics, Poetry, and Teaching, continued from page 12

Books Edited by Arnold Adoff

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Madeleine L'Engle -- A WRINKLE IN TIME; MANY WATERS
Danny Santiago -- FAMOUS ALL OVER TOWN
Joyce Carol Thomas -- MARKED BY FIRE; WATER GIRL
Laurence Yep -- LIAR, LIAR; THE MARK TWAIN MURDERS
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Adapting Novels into Films -- **Randal J. Hendee**
Creating Bibliographies Using Computer Data Bases -- **Margo Sacco**
Picture Books for Young Adult Classes -- **Joan Nist**
Evaluating Young Adult Literature -- **Lois Buckman**
Unusual or Little-Known But GREAT Books -- **Diane P. Tuccillo.**
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"NOW THAT YOU ASKED . . ."

Ruth Cline, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO
Elizabeth Poe, Arvada West High School, Jefferson County, CO

We are combining some of the questions and concerns that teachers have expressed to us about including poetry.

What poetry should we include?

Many teachers who successfully use Shel Silverstein's poetry would like to extend their students positive reactions to poetry by other authors. "This is the first poem I've ever liked," and "Can we read more poetry like this?" are frequent comments from students about Silverstein's poetry. Silverstein's appeal seems to stem from the familiarity of his subject matter (taking out the garbage, messy rooms and not going to school), his humor and his creative use of language.

Unfortunately, the poetry selections in textbook anthologies often do not have the same appeal for students. Teachers, therefore, may want to explore poetry in other available sources. One type of poetry which deals with familiar topics is poetry written by students. For example, award-winning student peoms are collected in *Mad, Sad, and Glad*, edited by Stephen Dunning. One example of a poem with which students can easily identify is "The Telephone Conversation" which begins

> Half a mile of copper wire
> separates us, yet brings us
> this close
> in protective annonymity
> and privacy from each other
> that eases our shyness
> and fearful reserve.

Another book of poems by students, ages five to 13 from the English-speaking world, is *Miracles*, collected by Richard Lewis. Although not written by their peers, *Pocket Poems: Selected for a Journey* by English teacher Paul Janeczko, incorporates topics of general interest to adolescents like "Song Against Broccoli" and "Suzie's Enzyme." Richard Peck, former English teacher and current author of young adult novels, has edited several collections of poetry, such as *Pictures that Storm Inside My Head, Mindscapes* and *Sounds and Silences*.

Students with particular interests can find special collections containing poems on those topics. For instance, *Room for Me and a Mountain Lion*, selected by Nancy Larrick, includes Eskimo and Indian chants as well as contemporary poems, all which celebrate open space and the natural world. Myra Cohn Livingston has collected poems from other countries in both the original language and the English translation in her book *A Tune Beyond Us*. These would be of special interest to students studying foreign languages.

What classroom approaches would be most effective to encourage student appreciation of poetry?

Along with pertinent subject matter, it is important to approach poetry in ways which will help students enjoy it. Begin by reading the poem aloud, allowing the students to experience the sound and flow of the words. Give them a chance to respond in writing, in small group conversations and/or in whole class discussions. Questions help facilitate expression of initial student response: "How did you feel when you listened to this poem?" "What do you think the poem means?" "What did you especially like/dislike about this poem?" "What in the poem made you respond this way?" Teachers need to accept students' responses without judgement or attempting to impose their own interpretations at this point.

When students are ready to move from a personal response to an analytical response, the teacher may ask them to find examples of the literacy techniques used by the poet, such as rhythm, rhyme, imagery, symbolism and alliteration. These devices can be discussed in terms of the poem's effectiveness and the student's appreciation of the poet's craft.

In addition to discussion, teachers can model activities that combine art, music, colors and shapes which mirror moods, feelings and themes found in poems. For example, *Talking to the Sun*, edited by Kenneth Koch and Kate Farrell, juxtaposes art works from the Metropolitan Musuem of Art with poetry from different time periods and cultures. The book transcends grade levels and shows the universality of both media. Students may be encouraged to create their own illustrations, take their own photographs, film their own videos and/or choose their own art selections corresponding to the poems they have read. Making such connections can deepen students' insights and broaden their appreciation for poetry.

If teachers avoid being too anxious about *teaching* poetry and experience it along with their students, the teacher's literary experience and the students' innocent responses can merge to create a mutually enjoyable encounter with poetry.

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Author's Note: "Now that you asked . . ."is a column devoted to answering the questions of readers who wish information on young adult literature and its authors, or about the teaching and publishing of this literature. Send questions to: Ruth Cline, School of Education, Box 249, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

BIFOCAL EYES: THE MIDDLE-AGED PARENT LOOKS AT ADOLESCENT LITERATURE THROUGH NEW LENSES

Susan S. Geary
Williamsburg, Virginia

Nowadays I find myself to be the middle-aged parent of a son rapidly becoming a teen-ager. For the first time I am reading adolescent fiction with bifocal eyes. I can read these books with the myopic vision of my son and my students and my self of thirty years ago: such egocentrics respond to the particulars of characters and situations which are closest to them, and the remains of the novel are out of focus, perhaps lost in a haze. At the same time, I read these stories through my middle-aged lenses; the elements closest to the younger readers are blurred, but I see the remains in sharper detail.

As a teacher I want to share this bifocal vision with my students--if only for a short time--so that they can see there is something else out there in the haze. As a parent, I want my students and my son to focus specifically on the parent figures in the haze, to see that they too have personal struggles as parents and as people. I want these adolescents to see that parents have an existence apart and beyond their relationship with their children. For the adolescent, developing this perception is the beginning of an adult relationship with his parent.

Of course there is no point in lending my lenses, if they can serve no purpose. In many adolescent novels there are no parents to see. This convention of the absent parent is popular because it allows the adolescents themselves to experiment freely with adult roles and situations. Likewise in some instances there is a parent present, but only as a pale shadow: as Jerry's father in Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* these parents appear, but do not matter. They may be well-meaning, but they are ineffectual. There are no lessons to be learned from them. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the rare instance of a parent who cannot be overlooked because he is a central figure in the novel and in the life of his child. Rob's father in Robert Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* is such a parent. Of course Rob is still young--only 13 when the novel begins--and part of a strong family unit; his father is dying. These unique circumstances make it possible for Haven Peck to assume such an important role in the novel; he needs to prepare his son for the day he will no longer be there for him.

As a parent looking at adolesent literature with new found eyes I find Peck's revelation of such a father-son relationship to be rare and personally ego-satisfying. The parent is neither ignored, nor shunned, nor found to be insignificant in the life of his child; he is seen as a powerful positive force. Nevertheless, I do not expect adolescent literature to provide parents such ego trips. I have no quarrels with the more usual peripheral role of the parent in this genre. As in real life, the parent's increasing status as a background figure is necessary and appropriate. No matter whether these mothers and fathers be central or peripheral characters, the parents I selfishly would like my son to take note of are not stereotypes. Rather they are individual men and women who are revealed to have an existence outside and beyond the consciousnesses of their children. Even though in some cases these parents may be the direct cause of their children's problems, they can still provide my son and students a glimpse of a parent as an adult apart and independent from his/her relationship with offspring. For both the adolescent and parents experience a special version of separation anxiety: for different reasons parent and child must work hard to recognize each other as wholly separate, independent and unique. The severance of this symbiotic bond is essential for each to continue to grow and for each to find a satisfying adult relationship with the other. Thus in Judy Blume's *Forever* the protagonist Katherine must learn to accept responsibility for her sexual behavior; her father and mother must allow her to do so (and hope for the best).

It is easy for a parent like myself to identify with the stuggles of these parents to separate themselves from their daughter. The nature of their internal agony is more obvious to the reader than to Katherine, who interprets the conflict to be one between her parents and herself, rather then within her parents. It is only when her parents give up their right to control Katherine's sex life that she is free to see them as more complete individuals (e.g.: they are sexual beings also). I think that it is worthwhile for teenagers to know that they are not alone in their experiencing of separation anxiety; their parents are also afraid--afraid to let their children grow up and afraid to let their children see them as they really are. I also think that for the adolescent this lesson may be more usefully learned, at least initially, from the emotional distance of an observer rather than a participant. An adolescent may veiw such struggles in his own parents as self-indulgent and self-pitying. I hope that the teen-aged readers to whom I lend my viewpoint see clearly, if only briefly, parents like those of Katherine or the father of Paul in Walter Dean Myer's *The Young Landlords*.

Paul and his father have a typically uneasy relationship. The father nags and talks at his son, and Paul is resentful. About midway through the novel the two travel to a funeral together. It is the funeral of Paul's Uncle Jerry, his father's brother, and it takes place not in Harlem, but in rural West Virginia where his father was born and raised. On this trip Paul learns that years ago his father and uncle stole some petty cash. Jerry was caught, but he lied in order to protect his brother who escaped. After that, Jerry dropped out of school and his life went downhill. According to Paul's father, Jerry found an excuse to give up. Paul's father knew he was not responsible, but nevertheless he felt guilty and helpless. For years before his brother's death, he silently mourned the loss of his brother. On the way home Paul reflects on his father

> living there and being with those people. It was a part of his life that I hadn't even suspected was there, and I wondered how much there was to him. . . .I wondered, as I lay in bed kind of sorting things out, if he thought I might not make a go of it, like his brother, and that he might lose me too. Losing people like that, the way my father put it, was scarey.

It is also scarey for adolescents to be responsible for their actions, and for parents to be seen as they really are. But by showing Paul another side of his life, Paul's father has gained the understanding

of his son, and Paul has found a love and concern that were always there. As the novel progresses Paul's father begins to offer rather than impose advice, and Paul learns to accept rather than resent such help. Each is resolving his separation anxiety.

Many other adolescent novels portray such resolutions, albeit in different situations with differing degrees of success. It is my simple wish, as a parent and a teacher, that my son and students have one or more opportunities to see around and beyond themselves in the literature they are reading, to read--if only briefly--with a vision more farsighted than their own so that they may see not only themselves as more than children, but also their parents as more than parents.

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Historical Poetry, continued from page 39

historical writing that any of us do, it will be richer because of the writing that we did. Although we did not follow this creative historical writing activity with readings of various established works, in my mind, the odds are good that such literature study would itself have been more lively and productive because of the historical writing experience. Creative writing, it seems, can become a readiness for creative reading.

Certainly, this creative writing class was made of teachers, not young adults. But as teachers of young adults in particular, we could not help but continuously evaluate the teaching potential of the approach we were discovering. The ingredients were not new: experiencing, talking, writing, supporting, experiencing, talking, writing, supporting. To make literature and writing work, we simply have to do what we know works, and accept nothing less. In the end, we had no doubt that some version of this kind of course can work with young adults. We discovered, finally, that to make a pot is to make one that is purely yours. You've got to get your hands in the clay while it is still wet.

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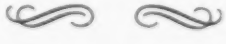
Nonfiction, continued from page 48

problems in youth literature of some of the 35 countries which rim the Pacific. For instance, **Carmen Garcia-Moreno** spoke movingly of the recently initiated, and as yet very small effort, to provide books for the youth of Mexico, where half the population is under 16. By contrast, **Okiko Miyake** showed a dilemma in Japan, where quality publications must compete with over four million mass-culture comic-style books produced each week, totaling 17 percent of the publishing output.

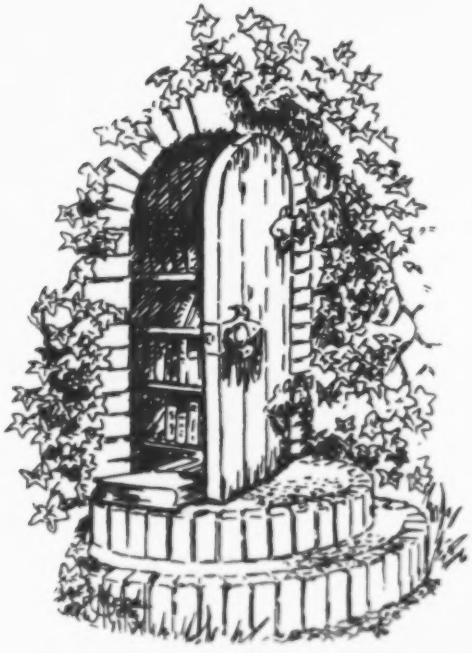
English-speaking countries had featured speakers. Australian novelist **Victor Kelleher** gave the first evening address and included comments on well-known Australian writers such as IBBY award-winning author **Joan Wrightson**, who believes that Aboriginal legends are inherent in Australian culture and therefore also appropriate for non-Aborigine writers; and **Ivan Southall**, who has chronicled the Australia of the 30s and 40s, rather than the multicultural country it now is. **Dorothy Butler** was the concluding banquet speaker, urging "The Need for Narrative in Childhood." Another New Zealand speaker, **Joan Brockett**, described the movement to acknowledge the Maori population, including official status in 1987 of Maori as a national language. Critic and scholar **Sheila Egoff**, who initiated the PacRim conferences in Vancouver a decade ago, represented Canada.

U.S. speakers appropriately began with **Mildred Batchelder**, for whom the ALA translated-work award is named and who continues to crusade for international literature exchange. Other Americans included **Myra Cohn Livingston; Charlotte Zolotow; Eleanor Cameron; Laurence Yep**, who combined humor with depiction of growing up as a minority youngster in America; **Sid Fleischman**, who did tricks of magic, his adolescent and continuing love; and **Margaret Bush**, who gave a scholarly brief on the burgeoning non-print media for youth, evidence of the change from the linear mode of print to the cluster segments of audiovisuals and computer software. Other programs included film, puppetry, folkdance/music and a concluding poetry performance by **Ashley Bryan**.

The United States is shifting from a European outlook to the Pacific, economically and in immigration. This conference was a worthwhile attempt to focus literarily in this other direction. Several countries have offered to host a future Fourth Pacific Rim meeting; if more participation from such major cultures as mainland China, Korea and Indonesia is included, the Conference will grow in value.



THE BACK DOOR



Earlier this year the American Library Association conducted a poll of regular public library users. What they discovered was not very surprising, but worth noting. People who use the public library are more adventurous, more likely to take vacations, higher paid and better educated than the average American. "Ah," you say, "That has nothing to do with the library; that has to do with the people who use the library." Perhaps, but I wonder. Do more adventurous people use the library; or do they become more adventurous because they use the library? I suspect both are true.

I know that the public library has made me more likely to pursue an adventure. I am not one to venture out on my own blindly, nor am I willing to trust someone else to show me the way. When I have a question about something; I go to the public library. This is certainly true of the traveling I've done. Rarely do I go off on a trip without raiding our local public library. I want to know something about the history, the people and the geography of places I visit. When forced to make a decision about which refrigerator or microwave to buy, I head to the public library. Now, there are those who say that my reliance on information from the public library means I am less adventurous. But, alas, without the public library I would never have traveled to Europe alone; I would not have purchased my word processor, and, indeed, I'd still be doing all my cooking in a conventional oven.

If you are willing to buy my contention that use of the public library does make an individual more adventurous, then, perhaps, you will follow this next line of reasoning. I have been a frequent library user for most of my life. I can't remember a time when I did not go to the public library. In my preschool years my mother and I made the trek at least once a week; during elementary school the visits continued; by junior high I was walking to our local public library and taking the bus to one in a nearby city. I remember that the public library was a place where I met my friends. It was also a place in which I could have a date, without my parents objecting. The public library in my community was filled with children and adolescents.

Today, when I visit our local public library I see many children and parents in the children's room, but I rarely see young adults. Now, I have no statistics to back this up, nor am I sure if this is indicative of any other part of the country. However, it is an impression that disturbs me because I believe the ALA survey is correct, both the chicken and egg interpretations of it.

There are many reasons why young adults do not visit the public library: (1) Transportation is a problem in many communities. (2) School libraries are so good that they need not go to the public library. (3) Going to the library is not a part of their childhood, and they are unsure how to operate in one. (4) High school students are not required to do the research they were once expected to do. (5) Public libraries do not encourage young adult visitors.

I can't leave this without expressing my own personal concern about number five. Most public libraries house their young adult books in the children's room. Most self-respecting young adults would not be caught dead sitting in those wee little chairs, amongst the stuffed animals. (Public libraries do a fantastic job attracting children.) Those young adult books that are not in the children's room, usually due to their controversial nature, are in the adult stacks and not easily found by young readers. In addition, as Margaret Edwards recognized in her classic work *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts: The Library and the Young Adult* (Hawthorn, 1974), many adults who work in libraries could do without young adult clients. For like me, many adolescents are likely to visit the library for reasons other than research and reading.

"So what?" you ask. "If young adults have good libraries in their schools, which we all agree are central to the education they receive, why should we care if they visit the public library?" Well, I for one believe the ALA's poll. In addition, I think there are several other reasons we should care: (1) Even if the school library is outstanding, the collection cannot have all the holdings of the public library. (2) Threats of censorship have forced many school libraries to remove more adult works from their shelves. (3) Library use is a habit. If our students do not use the public library as young adults, they are less likely to use it as adults. (4) There is no better place to meet good friends than in the stacks of the public library.

If I am correct that young adults are not frequenting public libraries, and I hope I am not, then I believe we must encourage them to begin to do so. Teachers can do many things: (1) We can require our students to select books that are not on the shelves of the school library. (2) We can assign research projects that cannot be completed in the school library. (3) We can take a field trip to the local public library which can end with every student obtaining a library card. (4) We can invite those public librarians who believe that young adults should use the library (and most do) to our classes to discuss public library services. (5) We can send information about the public library home to parents. (6) We can subscribe to library newsletters and post special events on classroom bulletin boards. (7) But, most important, we must use the public library ourselves, and share our enthusiasm for it with our students. In this way we will not only help our students become more adventurous, we will become more adventurous ourselves.

Charlie Reed

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